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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

IDEALISM, THEOSOPHY AND SOCIAL PASSION IN CANADIAN POETRY: 1920-1940

by

(C) ALAN STUART RICKETTS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Idealism, Theosophy and Social Passion in Canadian Poetry, 1920-1940 submitted by Alan Stuart Ricketts in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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FOR ALEXANDER H. BRODIE

ABSTRACT

Although modernism has been recognized as the major achievement in Canadian poetry during the interwar period, these years were also a time when a concentrated, but unsuccessful, attempt was made to revitalize the native poetry which had begun with the Confederation school. The dominant poetry stressed idealism and nationalism. Significant variations were verses inspired by theosophy and the social gospel.

The main idealist culture, buoyed by the patriotism and hope created through the sacrifices and dedication in the Great War, rejected the important changes in sensibility of the early twentieth century. It asserted the ennobling of reality; it rejected materialism, evolution, science and the new cynicism towards politics. A strong nationalist bias also discouraged participation in cosmopolitan innovations, focusing attention inward. These poets revered the Canadian cultural past but they only imitated the earlier models in an inadequate and unimaginative manner, ignoring the opportunity to use them as a basis for a new departure. The conservatism and escapism of this idealist culture is underscored by various attacks on modernism.

Theosophy was a partial departure from these problems. Esoteric doctrines within a quasi-scientific framework created the illusion that the adherents had a more effective idealism and an advantageous macrocosmic vision. They were less fervent in their

nationalism and more selective in their use of the earlier heritage. The greatest success was achieved in the regional writing of the west coast, particularly with the work of A. M. Stephen. Other theosophical poets tended towards vague, limpid and unarresting expression.

Social gospel poetry was an attempt to comment on and solve the problems of economics and society. This movement was escapist, especially during the depression years, because it continued to profess bucolic or populist ideals for an industrialized, urban society. Initial responses were sentimental and stressed individual assistance to the unfortunate. With the urgency of problems in the 1930's comments became more general and didactic. Communism was attacked but it was, in Canada at least, a further idealist reaction to reality. The social gospel movement atrophied as more liberal proponents were discouraged and conservatism dominated. Only the C. C. F. and the poetry of F. R. Scott indicated new directions.

All three approaches were predicated on the belief that the native poetry in the interwar period was significant and reflected Canadian identities. Almost none of the writers, though, regarded poetry as an art, or even a craft. It was a convenient and fluent way of expressing emotion, sentiment and archaic attitudes. The belief that a cultural renaissance was underway has been revealed to be an illusion in later years. These writers were merely participating in the final decline of a once-vigorous style of poetry.

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INTRODUCTION

Canadian interwar poetry is now chiefly remembered for the activities of modernists and radical writers during the depression. The McGill poets, along with writers who shared their outlook, and the leftist poets did produce the majority of verse which is still read and studied; but there were numerous other poets, believing in idealism and nationalism, who wrote in Canada during these years; there were also poets who adopted more moderate views on social change. We are very conscious of modernism and radicalism, the movements which grew and flourished between 1920 and 1940. We are less aware of the declining movements without future disciples which attempted to sustain the earlier values of Canadian poetry and revitalize the traditions. Very little of the latter verse can make any claims to be good poetry; but it is significant in historical and sociological terms as an hitherto obscure part of our culture which should be more thoroughly understood.

Modernists reacted violently against this poetry. F. R. Scott's "The Canadian Authors Meet", for example, satirizes the pretentious and incompetent writers who basked in the glow of a supposed cultural renaissance:

> Expansive puppets percolate self-unction
> Beneath a portrait of the Prince of Wales.
> Miss Crotchet's muse has somehow failed to function,
> Yet she's a poetess. Beaming, she sails
>
> From group to chattering group, with such a dear
> Victorian saintliness, as is her fashion,
> Greeting the other unknowns with a cheer--
> Virgins of sixty who still write of passion.[1]

Scott directs his scorn at the public activities of this culture. Munro Beattie, whose Ph. D. thesis explored the rise of Canadian modernism, discusses the substance of this poetry in the Literary History of Canada (2d. ed., 1976):

> worst of all, the versifiers of this arid period, having nothing to say, kept up a constant jejune chatter about infinity, licit love, devotion to the Empire, death, Beauty, God and Nature. Sweet singers of the Canadian out-of-doors, they peered into flowers, reported on the flittings of the birds, discerned mystic voices in the wind, descried elves among the poplars. They insisted upon being seen and overheard in poetic postures: watching for the will-o'-the-wisp, eavesdropping on "the forest streamlet's noonday song," lying like a mermaid on a bed of coral, examining a bird's nest in winter, fluting for the fairies to dance, or wandering "through some silent forest's aisles" (v. 2, p. 234).

Such comments have discouraged further study of this writing. These judgements do have merit and adequately describe the majority of creative activity and poetry. The purpose of my thesis is not to argue that we can discover much neglected poetry of any merit but to suggest in more detail the ideas and values of these writers who have been eclipsed by modernism and radicalism and to describe the more interesting aspects of their work.

Initially, the nationalist and idealist writing and activity which dominated the public consciousness of Canadian culture in the 1920's are described and their lack of effectiveness is analysed. The remainder of my thesis considers two sections of this poetry which do deserve further study. Theosophy was an occult attempt to create a new vision of reality that would transcend the materialism of the twentieth century; poets affiliated with this movement wrote a varied and interesting body of work that is a unique feature in Canadian

poetry. Finally, the last sustained expression of the social gospel --during the years of the depression--is explored to show the complexity of the responses to economic uncertainty and personal suffering in the 1930's. Therefore, this study should provide a further dimension in our understanding of Canadian poetry during the interwar period.

These writers seem to us to have been extremely isolated from the rapid changes in thought and literature which mark, in a retrospective study, our sense of the importance of the early twentieth century. They were participating in the decline of the vigorous culture which had been initiated by the Confederation poets, a movement that may be traced from the publication of Charles G. D. Roberts' Orion in 1880. But the writers were not aware that they presided over the enfeebled dotage of romanticism and nationalism in Canadian poetry. They believed, on the contrary, that they were voices of sanity and moderation in a world prone to extremism and insanity. Lorne Pierce believed that there was an ideal equilibrium in the 1920's as "the growth of a robust nationalism, and an increasing cosmopolitanism" effectively balanced each other. In An Outline of Canadian Literature (1927), he claimed that

> a wider world background prevented the amor patriae from degenerating into a bombastic national philistinism, while the more perfect integration of the spirit of the Dominion, guarded the Canadian amicus humani generis against a vapid, sentimental and useless altruism without centre or circumference (p. 88).

These comments are not convincing today: the balance was drastically tilted towards conservative outlooks, idealism and nationalism. The word "cosmopolitanism" has been redefined by A. J. M. Smith, in The

Book of Canadian Poetry (1943), to suggest an enthusiastic interaction with contemporary developments; the native poets believed that they were cosmopolitan because they admired romantic and Georgian authors in England and the United States.

Modernism, now an accepted and admired accomplishment, has changed our perceptions of and demands on poetry to a remarkable degree. We can no longer find any aesthetic delight in the verbose emotionalism, didacticism and sentimentalism which was, by and large, the hallmark of native poetry during the interwar period. As Smith wrote in the first edition of his anthology, the new poetry was "the poetry of ideas, of social criticism, of wit and satire, that has replaced the descriptive or contemplative poetry of the nineteenth century" (p. 29). More concisely, it was "the language of the intelligence" (p. 30). The contemporary poetry which has hitherto been ignored will not possess these qualities but it will illuminate the death-throes of a romantic outlook which did dominate Canadian verse for almost one-half of a century.

Idealism was the dominant keynote of the years following the Great War. A religious, or at least a transcendental, outlook was most common; the poetry was also opposed to rationalism and science, particularly the implications of evolution. Canadians gloried briefly in their important role in world affairs, but the general cultural response was nationalist, an orientation which led to a myopic concentration on Canadian identity and ideas and a consequent further isolation from new cosmopolitan developments. Provincialism was intensified by a concentration on past romantic poetry written in

this country; the younger writers used nature as a place of retreat and were content with flaccid imitations of exhausted forms rather than searching for more vigorous and relevant means of expression. All of these propensities were evident in their specific attacks on modernism.

Theosophical writers partially escaped the general tendency to insularity and imitation because they created verse within the framework of a system of esoteric beliefs that alleviated some of the sentiment and anaemia which idealism fostered. Although they participated in nationalism, they were less dogmatic in outlook; theosophy was a macrocosmic vision and the critical writing is often aware of a tension between national and cosmopolitan tendencies. Among the poets there was a series of difficulties in expressing mystical insights in cogent and interesting language, despite their novel approach. Two theosophists, though, do achieve a certain, partial success. Robert Norwood and A. M. Stephen use romantic but simple language to advance their esoteric ideas, and Stephen's attempt to use native Indian mythology to teach theosophical doctrine is particularly interesting.

The social gospel poetry, in contrast, was concerned with the mundane affairs of economics and society. The movement, which stressed the fundamental responsibility of each Christian to ameliorate conditions during an earthly life, had both conservative and liberal factions, and poetry responding to the depression was scattered across the political spectrum. Support of fascism and violent anti-communism vied with populist and egalitarian verses.

No individual poets emerge, as they do in theosophical verse, with extensive and distinctive bodies of work--although F. R. Scott, who may be viewed as a transitional figure between the social gospel and the modernist critiques of society, is an exception; there are, instead, a series of reactions which are part of our social history and which reveal that there were more responses in Canadian verse to the depression than specific expressions of radicalism.

These three chapters, therefore, describe the most significant activities in a poetry which was to be totally overshadowed by modernism. While I have found few poems that should be re-read for their intrinsic merits, I believe that this material is, in its pervasiveness, a significant aspect of Canadian culture. The failure to create an earnestly awaited cultural renaissance in the 1920's reveals the failure of attempted moderation in the midst of cataclysmic change and the power of a self-satisfied culture to believe that it was writing good literature. The theosophical initiative was another futile effort to create a synthesis, although the writers' unique and often seminal comments on Canadian writing, and their attempts to cloak occult insights in the features of Canadian nature are interesting. Responses to the depression are a further fumbling before an overwhelming reality--but they do reveal the nature of responses in Canada to a changing reality. This evidence of the decline of a tradition also explicates the modernists' responses to their contemporaries and explains the relative ease with which they were able to supplant the existing poetry.

CANADIAN CULTURE AND POETRY: 1920-1940

The attempt to create a renaissance in Canadian poetry during the 1920's was harmonious with a wider cultural movement that was idealist, nationalist, conscious of its past and opposed to modernism. This school of poetry was dominant in the early post-Great War years and managed to maintain momentum--although its vitality and importance were diminished--throughout the interwar period. Modernism emerged as the most important style of poetry during these years, but the failure to create a flourishing poetry along native rather than cosmopolitan lines was because of the mistakes of the older poets and was not the result of a direct battle between the two forces. The native school was unable to sustain vigorous and relevant poetry which was well-crafted because of its reliance often on earlier values and forms of poetry.

These poets began with a false premise and compounded their problems with two understandable errors. Initially, they believed that the idealistic climate which followed immediately on the war would intensify rather than wither in the next decades. They stressed spiritual perspectives and attacked science, materialism and cynicism; they rejected the dominant ideas and mood of the twentieth century. The nationalist and idealist basis of the putative renaissance also insulated poets in Canada because they regarded foreign writers as competitors in the rivalry to create national cultures rather than as participants in a cosmopolitan activity. The isolation was also exacerbated by the restrictive Canadian cultural milieu

because the writers turned mainly to historical Canadian models for their inspiration. This tendency made their verse even more dated and less relevant to the modern world. Their own preferences and attitudes also are made clear through their various attacks on modernist writers.

I

The impetus for a renaissance in Canadian poetry during the interwar period was based on spiritual idealism. The real or the material had to be transmuted into the spiritual. Introducing his Canadian Poets (2d. ed., 1926), John Garvin argued that his contributors were striving "to give us reality, ennobled and spiritualized into permanent beauty" (p. vii). Edna Jacques also described the poet's role within this context in Dreams in Your Heart (1937):

> Making a web of beauty sheer and fine
> Dear earthly things but touched with the divine
> A song of people dull and commonplace
> Touched into radiance by special grace (p. 26).

The mundane and ordinary had to be transformed into the ethereal.

This idealism was escapist because it rejected the most significant shifts in modern awareness, particularly the increasing understanding of the implications of scientific thought. Evolution was a central target. William Bell declared, in Poems on Various Occasions (1927), that

> Life is a mystery,
> No evolution
> Can search its history,
> And find solution (p. 3).

The bare statement of certainty could suffice, but others recognized the need to engage in a direct battle. This fervent and committed

mood of idealism was expressed by Frances Laurence's The Band Plays a March (1936):

> The world needs zealots: we have grown too sane,
> Too scientific, and too coldly wise,
> Hardened our hearts, and hooded close our eyes,
> Lest we should feel some tremor in the brain
> From looking on the nakedness of pain.
> Even our thoughts we seek to standardize.
> Heroes we need, and fiery saints again (p. 15).

This last attitude is an indication of the pressure on Canadian inter-war writers who pitted themselves squarely against the major developments of the twentieth century.

Idealism, which inspired this poetry, was closely allied to a religious outlook. Priesthood was conferred on the writer, as Nathaniel Benson suggested in The Wanderer (1930): "to be a poet is to stand apart,/Midway 'twixt God and Man" (p. 23). J. D. Logan presented a similar attitude in the "Prefatory Note" to The Little Blue Ghost (1922):

> the pure and high-minded Poet is the supreme layman Priest of Religion and the Religious Ideal. And he knows, more than any other, that, as Plato said, it is a hard, hard task to achieve Beauty in thought, speech and deed (p. 5).

Poetry which was trifling or frivolous was often excused as the idle pastime of convalescence.[1]

The poetic vocation was presented, therefore, in exalted terms, even when a direct religious implication was absent. Annie M. Wilson, editing My Sanctuary Garden (1937)--her daughter's poems, stressed inspiration:

> poetic insight is a mysterious thing. This power called inspiration is one which is shared by all poets from the highest to the lowest. No one comes in contact with it without marvelling that its possessor can be so aware of

> unseen realities, so filled and uplifted by the certainty of eternal beauty manifested through material things (p. vii).

Logan wrote of the moral importance of verse in Highways of Canadian Literature (1924): "to become a poet may not be a moral duty. But if one elects the office of poet, then to perfect oneself...is to attain to high moral dignity in one's own soul and to impress upon the world the high spiritual function of poetry" (p. 28). These comments stress both the inspirational and didactic elements of the idealistic stance.

The approach was defended by university professors, most notably at Queen's University. James Cappon set the tone with comments on modernism:

> I can remember the wild hooting of Marinetti and the Italian Futurists twenty years ago, and in America one hears still a good deal of disparagement for reviewers who would have the public believe that Sandburg's Chicago or Amy Lowell's Thompson's Lunch Counter are summits of poetic art. University culture is conservative as it should be, a kind of rational counterpoise to the exaggerations of the passing day and the narrowness of spirit that is hardly alive to anything beyond its local horizon (QQ36:643, Aut 29).

In "Realism and Modern Poetry", J. A. Roy defended the conservative view of poetry by arguing that the central aspect of modernism was a realism which was being moderated because poets "are remembering anew that the first essence of poetry is beauty and that the just treatment of a realistic theme in poetry is impossible without the transfiguring and ennobling spirit of beauty" (QQ30:380, Ap-Jn 23).

These are the most detached arguments for idealism. Cappon's views specifically distrusted "narrowness of spirit" and concentra-

tion on the present, which were the major failures of Canadian idealism as it became allied with nationalism. But the union was logical--both elements grew out of the war. George Wrong, the pre-eminent historian at the University of Toronto, indicated his belief that idealism must be connected with action in The United States and Canada (1921); he wrote that "during the war faith made us spurn any thought that we could be beaten. It is treason to mankind to give up hope that similar endurance and courage can solve our problems of peace" (p. 191). The exuberance which marked the end of the war was declaimed by W. D. Lighthall shortly after the soldiers began returning home: "there will never be a vaster battlefield. There will never be richer experiences, more terrible shadows, more tragic tales, more glorious courage, more splendid triumphs, a higher tide of Empire, and a worthier cause to live and die for" (CB1:22, Ap 19).

But the war marked the direction of attention inwards on Canada rather than outwards on the world. Canada had provided a large number of soldiers in the conflict, establishing for the first time its status as a leading country in the world. Indeed, with Europe devastated by battle and Russia suffering internal revolution, Canada was one of a handful of world powers. By the beginning of the 1920's, also, the Canadian west had been virtually settled and an industrial economy had been developed. Attention turned to the needs of a mature country, including literature. Lorne Pierce, the editor of Ryerson Press since 1921, has recalled in An Editor's Creed (1960) that "the whole country seemed to be outward bound, conscious of its emerging identity, and conscious also of its growing ability to speak

for itself" (pp. 42-43). The country, however, was not really outward bound; writers turned inwards rather than towards the wider world.

II

The nationalist impulse to consolidate and extend the native culture was predicated on a common awareness of Canadian characteristics. Lorne Pierce's An Outline of Canadian Literature (1927) described the writing as characterized by "simplicity and sincerity," optimism, a spirit of courage, rugged dignity, symbolic and pantheistic use of nature, and mysticism (pp. 239-42). V. B. Rhodenizer reached similar conclusions in A Handbook of Canadian Literature (1930), suggesting that the country was imbued with qualities of "simplicity, sincerity, eagerness, romanticism, idealism, optimism, courage and the spirit of adventure" (pp. 263-64). These views stressed idealistic values but they narrowed the focus to a specifically Canadian context.

The focus on nationalism within an idealistic framework created a further isolation of Canadian writers from modern thought. The search was too much inwards and confined within the country. Poetry, for instance, was not regarded as primarily a cosmopolitan pursuit--as a form of art for which political boundaries were irrelevant--but as a component of a national identity. Poets in other countries, therefore, were developing artefacts for their own nations. Each group of poets was working in almost hermetically sealed compartments. Modernists, in contrast, realized the values inherent in

rejecting nationalism and embracing diverse influences.

The Canadian Authors Association, the dominant group in interwar writing, intensified this tendency towards isolation. When the more affluent and interested members travelled to England to visit famous authors in 1933--the very writers whom the conservative Canadian professors had read in their youth and still used as models of excellence--Rudyard Kipling was shocked to learn that there were over eight hundred Canadian authors worthy of membership. The misunderstanding was caused by the Canadians' interpretation of "author". Some members were magazine writers or journalists; many had only a a few published articles to their credit; others had been welcomed because they had paid a local printer to produce a chapbook or two of their verses.

The journalists, whose primary market was in Canada, were more devoted to national culture than to world literature. The majority of the poets were addicted to sentimentalism and archaic expression. We must evaluate Pierce's judgment of the group near the end of the period in terms of these factors:

> the founding of the C. A. A. was an enterprise of national significance. It encouraged a study of the history of our literature, directed attention to contemporary writers and their work, campaigned for decent contracts and honest copy-right and urged the necessity for a study of our writers in schools and societies, but above all it sent the members to school to each other. It gave them the practical support of a guild (CPM2:9-10, Jn 37).

The C. A. A. did aid writers, and its most significant influence was that "it sent its members to school to each other." But the learning was not beneficial. It only taught them to intensify their isolation

from modern influences in the writing of other countries. This insularity was praised as nationalism.

The major public function of the C. A. A. was to promote an annual "Book Week", an event which generated publicity for its authors and interest in their works. Participants viewed their activities in altruistic terms: "we cannot rest until our people are thoroughly inoculated with an appetite for reading and discrimination in choosing what they read" (CA9:2, My 32). The educational and ethical aims were supplemented by William Arthur Deacon, who found "a positive danger to a healthy nationalism" in imported books. He pleaded for participation "remembering that the movement is primarily patriotic, and only secondarily to help the native author, will you do your part?" (SN38:8, O 8 21).

The authors, and the poets in particular, did need all the support they could develop. Although there were over 1,200 volumes of verse published by Canadians during the interwar period, substantial sales for individual books were rare. Donald French warned potential authors, in The Canadian Writers' Notebook (1932), that a chapbook printing of 250 copies was very difficult to exhaust and that even established Canadian poets were pleased with sales of 500 for a collection of verse (p. 68). Many of the published collections were produced by vanity houses--particularly Stockwell in England--or by local commercial printers. Some authors, being more business-like, included advertisements in their volumes. J. Arthur Nichols' Around Home (1930) alternated poetry with pictures of Westinghouse appliances and was distributed by the company's dealers. Anne

Merrill's Songs of Sherbrooke (1932) included a series of rhymed advertisements. The following is typical:

> If you're keen on color thrills,
> Visit Sherbrooke Carpet Mills,
> Up on Bank Street, near the falls,
> Where the yellow oriole calls (p. 54).

Any help to sales could be welcomed.

The constricted market and methods of publication were unfortunate because even a small number of sales to friends and colleagues instilled a sense of achievement and importance in the author. With a plethora of works, rarely of any artistic stature, there was little opportunity or incentive to achieve a wider audience or to learn the craft of poetry. Verse and Reverse (1921), published and edited by the Toronto Women's Press Club, reveals the debasement of poetry through the universality of its distribution: the "Preface" asserted that "poetry lies in the heart of all, and that some attempts at expressing it may be found in hidden corners of almost any writer's desk" (p. 3). Archibald MacMechan had ample provocation, therefore, for his observation in Headwaters of Canadian Literature (1924) that "the writing of verse ranks almost as a national amusement like snow-shoeing or tobogganning" (p. 108). The systems of vanity publishing encouraged this pastime: each large community developed a series of poets who sold frequent volumes to their friends.

Circumstances were not much better at Ryerson, the most prolific and best-known legitimate publisher, which produced over one hundred chapbooks averaging twelve pages to introduce new poets to Canadian readers and to present small collections by well-known writers. Douglas Bush, a modernist critic, had dismissed most

Canadian poems as "apostrophes to dancing rivulets that no doubt give considerable pleasure to the author's relatives" (CF2:590, Ap 22), and this charge was true even for the Ryerson series. Pierce wrote to Katherine Hale, who was the wife of John Garvin, in similar but more polite terms: "we have found, after an experience of two years, that it is the author's own clientele of friends and acquaintances who form his audience in the case of these small volumes of verse" (LP3 N 9 28). Most poets were forced to distribute circulars announcing their forthcoming collections; they hoped that the response would eventually cover the printer's bill.

Less solitary promotion of Canadian literature was accomplished through public readings. Hundreds of people were turned away from the Book Week readings held at Hart House at the University of Toronto in 1929 which featured Charles G. D. Roberts, Arthur Stringer, L. M. Montgomery, B. K. Sandwell and others (CA7:4, D 29). In addition, John Murray Gibbon, a founder of the C. A. A., was Director of Public Relations for the Canadian Pacific Railway and able to provide free passes which allowed the poets to criss-cross the country. Roberts, Bliss Carman, E. J. Pratt and Wilson MacDonald were the major figures to take advantage of this opportunity, although others provided anthology readings of Canadian verse. The extensive impact which the personalities rather than the verse of these poets had upon audiences was noted by Grace Tomkinson in 1934:

> we are only beginning to sift the wheat from the chaff of our earlier poetry. It might be interesting in this connection to know how much of the popularity of our writers, whose names have become household words, was due to the quality of their work, and how much to their indefatigible journeyings from Sydney

> to Victoria, reading their verses in school-houses and halls, and picturesquely autographing copies of their books (DR14:469, Ja 34).

The tours also increased the stress upon Canadian writing and nationalism and minimized the impact of foreign culture. Popular writers from other countries did appear, generally in Toronto and Montreal, but the existence of the C. P. R. with its free passes and numerous C. A. A. locals with free accomodation ensured that the vast majority of readings--particularly in smaller centers--were held by unremarkable Canadian poets.

Sometimes comedy resulted from the nationalism and inflated self-importance that was nurtured by isolation, especially in the career of Wilson MacDonald. He was the most extreme advocate of the poet's prophetic role, and came to regard himself as an important new prophet. Some Canadian writers were inclined to agree. A. Ermatinger Fraser believed that he "illustrates most fully a characteristically Canadian note" among the poets active in the twenty years prior to 1928 (CA6:47, D 28). Many believed that this note was of international significance. A. M. Pound proclaimed that "Wilson MacDonald is blood royal of Parnassus. As a poet he takes second place to no living poet in Great Britain today; and he has not his equal in the United States. He will arrive to front rank among the great poets of our language" (CB8:363, D 26). David Harkness agreed in a review of A Flagon of Beauty (1931): "MacDonald's place among the immortals of English speech is now confirmed" (CB14:8, Ja 32). Nationalist pride and isolation from other cultural standards led to puffery.

His western tour during 1923 and 1924 was both a triumph and

a fiasco, illustrating the charismatic effect a live poet could have on susceptible audiences. He did quickly disenchant the C. A. A. groups who advertised and sponsored the readings by demanding that he be universally acclaimed as the greatest English-language poet in history and by staying at the most luxurious hotel in each prairie city which he visited--rather than in private homes--thereby gaining any profits from a reading as expenses and slighting the local poets; but some people were impressed. In particular, he attracted the financial and moral support of a Regina reporter, Irene Mooré, who wrote Pierce that

> I can hardly explain just my motive for desiring to increase his leisure except that his pages are what I would give my soul to have written. My not having the brains for that seems to indicate the next best thing is for me to do a little of the work that my powers are equal to doing (LP1 F 11 24).

MacDonald remained in this friendly atmosphere, although he was spurned by other authors and his publisher, and produced an opera with one hundred and twenty persons in the cast to pass the winter months (LP1 F 3 24).

Living often in penury, MacDonald continued his career into the 1950's, reading to a declining group of loyal disciples; he was determined to live solely by his poetry. He became adept at producing limited editions with elaborate script and hand-coloured illustrations. During his numerous visits to high schools, exhibitions and literary societies he barred the only exit at the conclusion of his readings with a table displaying his volumes. Janitors were bribed to assist by locking the other doors. He represented both the excess and the vigour of cultural boosterism in the 1920's; he was a new

type of travelling medicine man, one who sold verse rather than patented healing potions.

Another salesman of culture was Walter McRaye, who had travelled with Pauline Johnson reciting W. H. Drummond's French-Canadian dialect poetry. Still on the road in 1928, he stressed the importance of his work to Pierce:

> the point I have stressed in all this writing to you seems lost, that while the appeal of these poets and people with the writing bug to a public is limited, I have crossed Canada in the last thirty years over one hundred times, penetrated to every burg that has a population of three hundred, go back again and again, and they are glad to see me, fifty-two weeks a year I am on the go speaking to an average of one thousand a week.... In Cobalt the other day--the Kiwanis Club took a large list of Canadian books from me, they are pledged to present a book each to the high school library. I do this daily, what thanks do I get from the authors,??? (LP3 N 1 28).

This activity was supplemented by the appearances of Roberts, Carman, MacDonald and Pratt at Chautauqua-type gatherings at Muskoka in the summers.

Periodicals supported McRaye in the messianic task of informing Canadians about the richness and beauty of their present and past literature. Saturday Night, Willison's Monthly, Canadian Magazine and Canadian Bookman carried extensive reviews of Canadian writing. They were supplemented by newspaper accounts, which were also usually sympathetic to the more conservative British and American writers but hostile to innovation, even at home. Nationalist Canadians were favoured with reviews which were almost always warm and were often enthusiastic. Standards did vary--with Deacon's column in Saturday Night being the most incisive and the Canadian Bookman (closely

allied with the C. A. A.) being the most predictable, but they shared in the fervent promotion of Canadian culture.

Increased activity was also evident in publishing houses. In 1921 Hugh Eayrs was selected as president of Macmillan of Canada, a British-owned company which felt that it "had not been sufficiently allied with Canadian letters."[2] Before 1921 they had published a scant twenty-six Canadian titles, but the total reached 450 a decade later (CA10:21, S 32). Other houses, including Thomas Allen and McClelland and Stewart, attempted to emulate this pace; but Ryerson was the most ambitious. Textbooks, fiction and poetry were daily concerns, but the company also planned a series, the Makers of Canadian Literature, which was conceived as a forty volume set.[3] This branch of the Methodist--later United--Church published sixty-one Canadian titles in 1924 and eighty-four in 1929.[4]

Ryerson's editor, Lorne Pierce, became the most powerful figure in the nationalist culture. He was an ordained Methodist clergyman but also had a Ph. D. for a thesis entitled "The Contribution of Russian Literature to the Philosophy of Religion."[5] He shared the general idealism of the period and was a fervent nationalist. Under his tutelage were scores of writers who planned to create a renaissance in Canadian literature. Editing, for him, was a sacred task:

> I thought of my publishing house as a great organ in a cathedral, upon the console of which I could bring out whatever music I desired...therefore I would, as long as I held my chair, not allow publication of anything unbeautiful, untrue or unsympathetic.[6]

His dedication was a keynote in the period. In An Outline of Canadian Literature, Pierce made his understanding of Canadian writing specific:

he described the purpose of literature within a national movement--"great literature may be defined as the fine flower of an organized, self-conscious society. It is the characteristic utterance of the soul at the center of things, about which the life of a people integrates" (p. 17). But this belief led to the perpetuation of the isolationist nationalism which was an inadequate response to the excitement and uncertainty of the twentieth century. His own gentle support of mediocre and archaic writers had encouraged the belief, as Lighthall had prophesized, that "this is our Homeric Age."

Canadian poetry, and the cultural life generally, suffered from boosterism. The national infrastructures--publishers, magazines, reading tours and the C. A. A.--encouraged Canadian writers to concentrate on their own milieu. Once the national identity had been defined in the vagaries of "vigorous", "simplicity" and "spirit of adventure" Canadians were urged to write literature which embodied similar traits. Since other countries were believed to have different characteristics, there was only a weakening of Canadian uniqueness if one imitated or was responsive to foreign works. Each nation was perceived to be engaged in the competitive task of creating its own culture. Similarities could be applauded and differences could be easily dismissed.

At the end of the Great War, therefore, Canadians had been aware of the world, of the idealistic hopes for a new political and economic order. But the cultural response to this active participation in international events was nationalist and isolationist. The War marked the maturity of Canada; after years of settlement and building the country had proven its power abroad. This was the opportune time,

it was believed, to develop a literature which would reveal the country's new identity.

This orientation presaged a retreat. Organizations and periodicals stressed nationalism and slighted foreign developments. The strong conservative, idealist and amateur qualities which were already present were intensified and crystallized. While many of the beliefs and styles of Canadian writers were tolerable at the end of the War, they became increasingly conspicuous as provincial or old-fashioned as the interwar period progressed. The attempt to create a nationalist literature resulted in the perpetuation of ideas and styles which could have profited from refurbishing even at the beginning of the period.

III

Within this context, it is understandable that great attention was focused upon the past Canadian tradition. The 1920's were, after all, the time which wished a renaissance rather than a completely new beginning. Nationalism and the C. A. A. encouraged the extensive teaching of Canadian literature in the schools, although influences on the universities were negligible. Critical handbooks were written and anthologies were edited to meet the unprecedented demand. The stress was upon the achievement of the Confederation poets, and both Carman and Roberts toured extensively and encouraged young writers. The effect, though, was unfortunate for creativity: although Canadians undeniably became more aware of their traditions, they also decided--encouraged by the isolation of nationalism--to continue this heritage. The traditions, though, were no longer fresh, and the imitations were

not good. The discovery of the past led to the retention and perpetuation of the past. This was a consequence of the isolation which nationalism demanded.

Only one book-length study of Canadian literature was available in 1920--Archibald MacMurchy's Canadian Literature (1906); but five more criticisms were published in the next decade. Archibald MacMechan's Headwaters of Canadian Literature (1924) followed the shrewd and cautious judgments of MacMurchy, but the other volumes were more optimistic. Highways of Canadian Literature (1924), compiled by John Daniel Logan with contributions on fiction by Donald French, was the most flamboyant and idiosyncratic. Pierce's An Outline of Canadian Literature (1927) and V. B. Rhodenizer's A Handbook of Canadian Literature (1930) defined the past tradition in terms of the idealistic concerns of the present and detected an upsurge in their own time of native genius. Lionel Stevenson's Appraisals of Canadian Literature (1926) accomplished the same task from its theosophical perspective.

General interest in Canadian literature and the demands of the schools for texts is evident in the number of new anthologies. The most comprehensive collection was John Garvin's Canadian Poets (1926), a revised and expanded version of his 1916 edition. Our Canadian Literature (1923), edited by Pierce and Albert Durrant Watson, stresses near-contemporary poetry: two-thirds of the selections were written after 1890. Donalda Dickie edited The Canadian Poetry Book (1922) and E. K. and E. H. Broadus compiled A Book of Canadian Prose and Verse (1923). These collections were supplemented by A. M.

Stephen's The Voice of Canada (1927) and The Golden Treasury of Canadian Verse (1928).

But the reverence for the recent past in Canadian literature is most evident in the treatment of Roberts and Carman. After living abroad for a number of years, both returned to Canada in the 1920's when they were in their sixties. Their actual presence in the country made the past seem once more alive, focusing further attention on older styles and thoughts. While critics usually agreed with Eliza Ritchie's estimate of pre-Confederation literature--as "small potatoes and few to a hill," they also agreed that the Confederation verse "now already to some extent gives adequate expression to the thought and emotion of the Canadian people" (DR1:108, Ap 21). Pierce expressed this thought more enthusiastically: "Canada was not discovered until our poets found it, nor was this land explored until our poets made it known like explorers." Lampman had died in 1899, and Duncan Campbell Scott refused to participate in the nationalist excitement, but Carman and Roberts--the Maritime poets who had left Canada before the turn of the century, returned to enjoy recognition of their pioneering achievements.

Garvin had commented on the neglect of Carman in the first edition of Canadian Poets (1916), but a near-fatal illness in 1920 marked a dramatic new stage in the poet's career. In "An Open Letter", published in the Canadian Forum, Carman expressed thanks for Canadian concern and he then embarked on his first extended reading tour of the country. A few years later, Deacon recalled that "the tour was 'featured' in every paper in the Dominion in a way I never remember seeing a native author before nor since" (SN40:9,

My 16 25). Peter McArthur, who arranged Carman's initial readings, wrote Pierce in 1923 that "he appealed to the public almost as one returned from the dead" (LP1 Ap 20 23).

Carman was initially apprehensive, then surprised and overwhelmed by the praise that he received. In the fall of 1920, on the eve of his return to Canada, he wrote McArthur that

> a year away from New York, much of it in the mountains, has reverted me to something like the early wildness. I shy at crowds. The idea of a lecture "tour" or the like throws me into a palpitation, like any old maid! But if it must be done, I suppose it must (BC4 O 28 20).

After a few readings he informed the doctor who had treated him that "all these audiences are as attentive as a congregation and a whole lot too complimentary" (BC4 F 13 21). He wrote to another American, Irving Way, that "it is all very tremendous in its gratifying kindness. Breathless attention, crowded halls, and a strange, profound enthusiasm, such as I never guessed could be" (BC4 Mr 1 21). "The Prodigal's return was nothing to this," he exclaimed to McArthur (BC4 Mr 14 21).

His appeal was based on his persona as a stereotyped romantic poet, which was welcomed by the idealists. Donald Stephens has suggested, in Bliss Carman (1966), that "often, perhaps, he spent more time creating the picture of a poet as he thought it should be, than in working over poems that would prove that he was a poet" (p. 35), but his audiences were enthralled. Kathleen Barber, writing in the Canadian Bookman, described his "dream-like eyes that see into the far distance" (CB6:7, Ja 24). A male observer, Gerald Wade, was also overwhelmed by the poet's presence: "perhaps his greatest poems have

never been put on paper. That quiet, silent mind must create wonderful pen pictures that the owner would be afraid to disturb" (CB9:40, F 27).

Roberts, the senior member of the Confederation group, shared Carman's earlier obscurity and later acclaim. James Cappon was surprised to learn that Roberts was still alive when approached by Pierce to write a new study of the poet in 1923 (LP1 Jl 30 23). But two years later--on the eve of his return to Canada--Roberts was described as "the most famous of all Canadian poets and writers" by the Toronto Daily Star (LR2 F 5 25), and he quickly established a new contemporary relevance and reputation. Deacon wrote, in the same year, that the Toronto audience which greeted him was "gathered not so much as to honor the precocious genius of the eighties as to pay its respects to him who is our leader still, to the man who has been true to his ideals, and, though living far away, has been steadfast in his love of, and service to, his native land" (SN40:8, F 14 25). When Carman died in 1929, Ernest Fewster, the Vancouver Poetry Society leader, suggested that Roberts was the supreme Canadian poet:

> the pride of our Canadian literature rests on your shoulders; we could not wish a worthier, only now you fight alone. Though there be many in the rank and file behind you, yet you must lead; there are no others as yet for the mark you and Bliss set some years ago is still too high for us (CGDR1 Jn 17 29).

Affection for the aging poet, who was sixty-nine at the time of Carman's death, increased during the 1930's. Deacon wrote him in 1933 that "I love and reverence you with an affection that is partly the fealty a man owes his king or his general, and which a proper man rejoices to acknowledge." He added, "I know you are the only great

man, so far, in Canadian literature--.....No man but you can ever be the founder" (CGDR2 0 12 33).

Roberts was also given financial assistance by Canadians who believed that they had an obligation to ease the life of a man who had contributed so much to the country's culture. Earlier poets, including Lampman and Charles Mair, had been awarded civil service posts in recognition of their poetry, but Roberts had made a living solely through his prose fiction. When popular fashions had changed by the 1930's he was without an income. Appealing to Prime Minister R. B. Bennett for a $100 a month pension, Pierce described Roberts as "outrun in the economic struggle" and "bewildered with the new cries" (LP4 Ja 26 31). The request was based on the poet's "age, genius and attainments." Although Bennett refused any government assistance for Roberts through the Canadian Writers' Foundation--a group created to aid him--they did eventually raise enough money, with the assistance of Mackenzie King's government, to provide Roberts with a pension. A purse of seventy-five dollars had been raised at the time of Pierce's letter in 1931, and two years later the Elson Club in Toronto raised $1,000. When he received $700 of this amount at a dinner to mark the diamond jubilee of his first publication, Roberts quipped that "a prophet is not without honor or profits in his own land" (CB15:38, F 33).

Although the support for Roberts indicates the affection that he evoked, this poet is most important as an influential critic during the interwar years. His main goal was to restate moderate and romantic

values in a culture under siege by modernism. This outlook is epitomized in his introduction to Constance Woodrow's The Captive Gypsy (1926):

> among the qualities to be looked for in all poetry those of sincerity, simplicity and candour always make a particular appeal to me. Equally essential, according to my own artistic faith, are music in both thought and form, and conscientious workmanship (p. 1).

He concluded that these qualities in this book of Celtic Twilight verse made it "a refreshing protest against the defiance of sound technique, the mistaking of violence for strength and of ugliness for originality, which mark so much of our contemporary verse" (p. 1).

To the poets who planned a renaissance in the 1920's, Carman and Roberts were the major figures restating the best of the past. Carman offered the image of the transcendental poet, encouraging mysticism and romanticism. Roberts perpetuated the conservative values until his death in 1943, urging restraint and craftsmanship. But the cumulative effect, probably in spite of their own wishes, was to encourage poetry that attempted to mimic their themes and moods.

Obituaries for Carman indicate that their standards--even Carman's later standards--were not maintained. Sister Maura's tribute in Rhyme and Rhythm (1932) is hackneyed and sentimental:

> But his voice will live for ever
> In golden melody
> That can fill the sad with joyousness
> And set the fettered free (p. 9).

Nathaniel Benson described Roberts in The Wanderer (1930) as

> the patriarch of our native tongue,
> Whose garnered knowledge of a lifetime's depth
> Makes him more kindly, younger, and humane,

> Wise as the years, although he seems to own
> The matchless secret of eternal youth (p. 4).

The problem is evident in another tribute to Roberts. Gwendolen Massey wrote in Symphony (1935) that

> The younger poets glory
> In the beauty you intone
> You spend a day a-roaming
> With artists yet obscure,
> You tell of those immortals
> Whose friendship you have known--
> Your smile shall be remembered,
> Your kindness will endure (p. 5).

Roaming and reminiscences were vividly recalled; but the substance and craft of their poetry were not.

The most obvious result of this interest in the past was a retreat into nature. Since the best Confederation poetry was devoted to nature, the idyllic woods, nature was advanced as the proper subject of Canadian verse. In "The Deforestation of Canadian Poetry" (1928), B. K. Sandwell elaborated on this tendency, arguing that "Canadian poetry is becoming terribly urbanised, and the farm and the forest and the frog marsh are no longer getting a fair show in Canadian literature."[7] He implied that the urban writing was dominated by cosmopolitan concerns while the earlier Canadian poetry was possessed of a distinct tone and sympathy--"a kind of rhythm that was almost a picture of the way in which the reflection in the lake answers the picture of the woods up on its banks" (p. 99). Sandwell concluded that all cities

> are exactly alike as to their fundamentals. A poem about the drains or the abattoirs in Montreal is nowise different from a poem about the drains or the

> abattoirs in Chicago. But the Canadian woods are different from anybody else's woods, and the Canadian woods poetry was different (p. 101).

This outlook includes the nationalist urge for distinctiveness with concentration on past accomplishments.

Nature, though, was usually presented in the 1920's without vigour; it was an escape from urban reality, a place to meet God or an all-embracing mother. Agnes Wetherald presented the last concept in Lyrics and Sonnets (1931):

> O Earth, sweet Mother, take us back!
> With woodland strength and orchard joy,
> And river peace without alloy,
> Flood us who on the city's track
> Have followed stifling, sordid years;
> Cleanse us with dew and meadow rain,
> Till life's horizon lights and clears
> And nature claims us once again! (p. 165).

Winnifred Stevens' "Mist", in Gold Dust (1930), is also a magical escape from both reality and evil:

> Tenderly, silently, out of the stillness,
> Born of the hush of the eventide,
> Came the silvery mist with its web of enchantment
> And lo at its coming the tumult died.
> And soft through the silence a spirit voice whispered:
> "I have hid from thy eyes all the sordid and vile.
> I have silenced the din that thy soul might be strengthened;
> So cease from thy striving and rest thee awhile" (p. 7).

The poets were nostalgic, wary and weary of the world. They rarely observed nature but they called upon it to enfold them. The modern world and its thought were too overwhelming.

Other subjects were also plagued with irrelevance or bad style. Pet dogs, frozen cats, departed mothers and young ladies who drank were treated in passionate language; the latter with passionate disapproval. But the majority of the poetry written under the guise

of continuing the Canadian tradition was dominated by unabashed emotion. If the heroes, particularly Carman, were perceived to be romantic, spontaneous writers, the form could be (it was believed) overlooked for the urgent demands of emotion. "The Poetry Contest", in Malcolm Burns's Golden Gleams (1936), is a strong assertion of this outlook:

> Oh, give me the poetry that comes from the heart
> Smoothly flowing and crystal clear
> And free from the guile of the wordsmith's vain art,
> With a message of faith and cheer (p. 55).

In this way, the very prestige of the earlier poetry encouraged a decline in contemporary standards.

A further reason for the failure to revitalize the tradition lies in the stress on nationalism itself. Regional themes, particularly in fiction, have often been successful, and local, specific poetry captured images of pioneer life. But, as images--even the detailed scenes of Roberts and Carman--were studied, they became infused with concepts. Generalized words abound in this verse; sentiments and wistfulness tend to dominate. Rather than face the modern world, these poets used the tradition as a justification for the escape into unexamined emotion and too-fluent stanzas.

Ironically, the attempt to reassess the best poems in the Canadian tradition in order to gain an understanding of the country's heritage and to find direction for a renaissance in the 1920's was the final factor which ensured that this new plateau of activity would be recognized by few critics or poets fifty years later. Interest in the past was deformed into a belief that the past could be

ransacked to provide a justification for escapist, old-fashioned, trite and mediocre writing in the 1920's. Idealism had created a propensity towards rejection of the important concerns of the twentieth century; nationalism's demand for insulation against contemporary aesthetic developments in foreign countries exacerbated the tendency to write in isolation. The interpretation that the Canadian tradition was a vital force which could be continued in the 1920's was the final factor which would plunge this nationalist writing into obscurity.

IV

By the end of the interwar period the native poets became increasingly under siege; in university circles, for example, they were already regarded as a minor alternative to modernism, even in Canada. The depression had been very effective in deflating the exuberance of the 1920's, and old age combined with death to decimate the active ranks; new recruits were few. Attacks upon modernism became, understandably, more fluent and monotonous as the period advanced, but it was not more than an extension of first principles. The movement had always been against modernism, as it understood the concept and its implications. Attempts were often made to obscure the term's significance, as critics described their own native poetry as "modern"; but they could also identify the aesthetic challenge to their own work, albeit often in vituperative terms, as clearly as they could identify the larger challenges which the modern era presented to their beliefs--materialism, cynicism and science.

Many writers, though, were confident that they would win.

Thomas O'Hagan reflected the self-assurance of the nationalist culture when he declared that "the great hope and promise for Canadian poetry is in the fact that it has remained sane and normal and has never fully broken with the traditions of the master poets of old ages" (CB14:21, F 32). In "A Note on Modernism" (1931), reprinted in his Selected Poetry and Critical Prose (1974), Roberts suggested that the Confederation poets had heralded the modernist era because they "had already initiated a departure, a partial departure, from the Victorian tradition of poetry, years before the movement began in England" (p. 258). He noted that "to Canada modernism has come more slowly and less violently than elsewhere" (p. 298) but he used the term in a broad sense, rather than to refer specifically to the early twentieth century innovations: modernism, he believed, was a phenomenon which is common to every age, as "a reaction of the younger creators against the too long dominance of their older predecessors" (p. 296). Canadian modernists, he agreed with O'Hagan, "are essentially sane":

> they love not ugliness for its own sake, or incomprehensibility for the sake of being thought profound. Neither do they care for those petty affectations which are designed only to emphasize aloofness from the common, kindly race of men. Now and again, to be sure, there may be a gesture, of defiant propagandism or of impatient scorn. But in the main they are altogether preoccupied with beauty. And beauty they not only see with new eyes, but show it to us with simplicity and truth (p. 256).

Pierce shared in this extension of the meaning of modernism--in an attempt to defuse the implications of its claim to be totally contemporary and new. Approving Mary Matheson's Joy and Other Poems (n. d.), he wrote "she is not tempted by modernism except that best

kind of all modernism...to be very much alive and a part of the life of her own day" (p. 3).

Later English Poems 1901-1922 (1922), the Canadian anthology compiled by J. E. Wetherald, reflects these ideas. He also believed that there had been change, which he described as a shift towards increased idealism and sincerity. Indicating the other important feature of the nationalist response towards modernism, he simply dismissed the poets whom he did not appreciate or approve of:

> no other twenty years in the history of our literature has had so strange and varied a fashioning. First, a period of tentative activity, mainly lyrical, when the new century opened, gave high promise of no ordinary achievement. Then came the War, ravaging all plans, all conventions, all the quiet modes of thought and feeling....After November 1918, the poets, staggering and bewildered, had to begin their literary life anew. Many of them, fortunately for the world, soon sought the old paths, although with mien forever sobered. A few of them, fortunately for the world, soon sought the old paths with bloody heads unbowed, set themselves the task of solacing the broken hearted millions of the race.

Then he turned to modernists:

> a few of them (and it should not seem strange), turned almost cynics, drew away from everything that savoured of old customs and old forms, and essayed odd vagaries in subject and in style....Some writers of verse, well known and heralded in certain circles, are not represented here, because these pages have been sedulously kept free from whatever might be considered by any readers as coarse and fantastic. Moreover, no poems have been admitted here which set at naught or even sneer at the established doctrines and traditions of the past (pp. 12-14).

There is an aesthetic criterion in this slant, based on romantic or Georgian values, but there is also direct censorship, as in Logan's comments on the poet's idealistic vocation, of all material which denies the conservative and moral outlooks of the anthologist.

A sharp contrast to Wetherald's evaluation of the changes resulting from the war is provided by F. R. Scott's "New Poems for Old" (1931), a two-part article published in the Canadian Forum. The modernist poet stresses shock and change much more strongly and he denies the possibility of a reconciliation with the "old paths." Scott links the change in the forms and styles of poetry with a rejection of the Georgian world: "this loss of faith in the pre-war outlook on life predisposed them to an abandonment of pre-war literary conventions" (CF 11:296, My 31). This doubt was only a fragment of a larger rebellion:

> it was not a mere question of a change of attitude toward war. Every line of investigation explored intelligently seemed to lead to the same conclusion --that the orthodox was wrong. The old order of politics needed no consideration; the fact of the war was proof enough of its obsolescence.

Scott describes the revolution in knowledge, particularly in social science and physics:

> the old order of Deity was shown by anthropologists to be built not upon rock, but upon the sands of primitive social customs. Socialism and Communism cast over-whelming doubt on the value of the old economic order. Psychologists unearthed buried portions of the mind, and disclosed curious and not entirely clean springs of mental activity. The universe itself, after Einstein's manipulations, ceased to be an easy movement of heavenly bodies through infinite space, and became a closed continuum as warped as the mind of man, from which there was no escape. Morality disappeared in mere behaviour.

"Amid the crash of systems," he concludes, "was Romantic Poetry to survive? It would have been a miracle had no literary revolution occurred" (297).

These comments, by a lucid and comprehensive modernist

critic, indicate the sharp contrast between the nationalist and idealist poets and their younger rivals. The idealistic vision--as epitomized in Wetherald's comments--could not accept even a "sneer" at established traditions and doctrines. Perpetuation of the older values (including belief in God, morality, the sanctity of man and the idyllic society of independent businessmen) was primary to the idealist writers. They could regard the modernists as young rebels and ridicule their experimental forms, but they could never sympathise with the implications--which Scott makes very clear--of the new theories of the universe and the studies in social science. Roberts' approach, which broadened the category of "modernism" to include himself and young, traditional poets, and suggested that modernism was an extension of romantic poetry, was the instinctive and natural response to these threats to an entire outlook. The writing which could not be accomodated within this system was ignored.

Scott also directed his attention to the nationalist impetus of the idealists. He claimed that "the most important result of the modernist movement has undoubtedly been the reinstatement of poetry amongst the arts." The new poetry had an existence of its own and had to be considered by a reader "aesthetically and quite independently of his own views on politics and religion." Without this objectivity "society baptizes and enlists the poet, and so destroys him" (289), a comment which describes the plight of the Canadian idealist poets. Wariness towards nationalism and moral platitudes saved the modernists from restating archaic and hackneyed values. In contrast, the idealists consciously used poetry to advance their own values. A stress

upon the aesthetic quality of the poem, as distinct from its meaning and social implications, was not congenial to them.

The conservative critical values were doggedly retained in the face of these new developments. Much criticism continued to stress Annie Dalton's belief that the poet was a "feeler not thinker" (CA9:17, S 31) and Roberts' contention that "the poet should write from the heart rather than from the head" (CA10:19, S 32). Wilfred Gibson reflected these Canadian values in "The Trend of Modern Poetry" (1936), which appeared in the Canadian Bookman. He castigated the modernists who "carried their feeling to the point of violently repudiating the great masters of the old school" and believed that the movement was "given over to a scorn of natural human emotions and interests, and in the effort to be original its votaries were frequently very ugly and too often ridiculous in the fundamental canons of art" (CB18:10, N 36). In Canada, this response was capable of reaching a strident anti-intellectual pitch. J. Arthur Nichols wrote in Fireside Fancies (1925) that "it is not our desire to write verses which may be so involved in its formulation that it can be enjoyed only by the advanced students of literature, but rather to produce in simple, homely, easily understandable form, such little stories as will be read and enjoyed by the real people of this country" (n. pag.).

Leading modernist forms and figures were also specifically attacked. Free verse, in particular, was a constant target. The Canadian Bookman, for example, complained that it "is as if she [the Muse] had gone lame; she hops, stumbles, staggers, to the blaze of a jazz band" (CB7:63-4, S 26). Carl Sandburg's verse was believed to

resemble "poetry about as much as a pile of dirty rags resembles silk and broadcloth" (SN36:2, My 28 21). J. A. Roy--who commented on Ezra Pound but mistakenly quoted T. S. Eliot--announced that audiences are "realizing that rubbish of this nature from the pen of Mr. Ezra Pound is not poetry" (QQ30:388, Ap-Jn 23). Another writer, who was also not steeped in modernism because he cited T. G. Elliott, dismissed The Waste Land because the poet's "soul has panted so long for a living, vital moisture it has become exhausted in the effort, so he sates it with the second hand flavour of books." The critic characterized the poem as "an anthology of the bitterness of books" (CB5: 126, My 23).

Ridicule and dismissal were techniques used by both sides. The cosmopolitan and sophisticated attitudes of the modernists were as alien to the native writers as nationalism and idealism were to the intelligent and young writers who reached maturity without vivid memories of the war. Modernists believed that they were making a cataclysmic break with the past tradition. The more conservative writers agreed with Pelham Edgar that "a purged romanticism with its enthusiasm preserved, but its attitudes shorn away, is an attainable and desirable end of poetic effort" (QQ43:337, Aut 37). While the modernists were bemused by or contemptuous of this poetry, the idealists could not comprehend the sensibility or the goals of the younger poets.

As the prophecies of a new age which fired the 1920's were proved incorrect by the depression, the dream of a renaissance in Canadian literature was dashed by circumstances. Romanticism, even

purged, was no longer sufficient as poetic expression; modernism could not be diluted enough to become palatable to idealism. The Canadian culture, which commemorated the end of war with a dedication to battle for a new flowering of Canadian literature, was surpassed. Events of its own determining include the premise that the idealism so evident in 1919 was more than a brief phenomenon. Idealism did not, however, remain a dominant feature of the youthful, vigorous and accomplished writing which appeared in Canada during the following years. Nationalism and a myopic fixation on the past Canadian tradition ensured a more complete isolation.

The conscious attempt to create a new birth in Canadian culture failed. In retrospect, it is the public and journalistic activities--the hyperbole of the C. A. A. and the boasts of reviewers --that are more interesting than the private efforts at creativity. The nationalist movement began with an already-frayed idealism, but the momentum of capricious expectation overturned most cautionary comment. Nationalistic narrowness and reverence for the past poetry blinded the participants to events in the cosmopolitan world. Both general outlooks and aesthetic approaches were rapidly shifting, as F. R. Scott observed, but the nationalist culture had achieved, although only briefly, the secret of self-energized perpetual motion. It ignored whatever it disagreed with and continued its own activity. This response to reality made it very easy for the young Canadian modernists to completely repudiate contemporary literature at home and to make a fresh start.

THE THEOSOPHICAL IMPULSE

Theosophy, an occult system of belief which stressed reincarnation and oriental religion, had a significant influence on interwar Canadian poetry. The movement, founded in 1875, was racked by internal conflicts in its early years, but an independent Canadian section was established at the end of the Great War. Dissension was still present, but A. E. S. Smythe was able to direct the emphasis of the national movement away from spiritualist interests and towards studies of comparative religion. Canadian members, some of whom were prominent in periodical reviewing, drama and art, propagated their beliefs and approaches to creativity in travels throughout the country.

The members were more idealistic than modernist but their discipline and beliefs--which were quasi-scientific in method--gave them more cohesion and vigour than the general idealistic culture. They stressed universal brotherhood, but only a few individuals were considered to be worthy of adeptship, and they did not anticipate any immediate improvement in world conditions. Their macrocosmic vision allowed less disillusion and more resilience in a world which was increasingly materialist and cynical. Theosophists participated in the nationalist culture but they were more conscious of the cosmopolitan nature of art and found--in some instances--inspiration and escape from generalities by concentrating on regionalism. They also used psychic and transcendental elements of the Canadian tradition. The poetry of Robert Norwood reflects this affinity with

earlier writing as it combines theosophy and elements of Confederation poetry. The esoteric writers shared in the attacks on modernism, although their comments had the focus of primarily spiritual rather than aesthetic concerns.

The Theosophical Society was centered in Toronto, but the poetry which was written here tended to be vague and detached from reality. Smythe's verse was concentrated on philosophical meditation. Lawren Harris' Contrasts (1922) reflects this outlook--which was influential on the Group of Seven--but the rambling vers libre poems are not accomplished. Another painter, Bertram Brooker, is more interesting because a more extensive body of his philosophical and poetic writing reveals that he arrived at a similar outlook through personal searching.

Another independent writer with affiliations to theosophy is Tom MacInnes, whose exuberant paganism and shreds of partially-comprehended Zen Buddhism reflect the propensity on the west coast to engage in cosmic speculation. Annie Dalton also traces mystical states and creates mythology although she is more restrained and romantic. The theosophical leader on the west coast, Ernest Fewster, attempts a similar expression of esoteric belief through the natural features of the region. A. M. Stephen, though, is the most interesting participant in this kind of Vancouver writing, with meditations and attempts to weld theosophy with Kwakiutl Indian legends.

As a group, the theosophists and those affiliated with their orientation were a significant force in the native poetry of the

interwar period, but this aspect of Canadian poetry has not been systematically explored. The most common reference to theosophy today is a casual note of its influence on the painting of Brooker or Harris. Northrop Frye's comment in his "Conclusion" (1965) to the Literary History of Canada (2d. ed., 1976) on the Confederation period--that "world-views that avoided dialectic, of a theosophical or transcendental cast, became popular among the Canadian poets of that time, Roberts and Carman particularly, and later among painters" (v. 2, p. 228)--is also typical of the suggestions that theosophy was somehow significant without delineating its nature, its actual manifestations or its importance.

I

Theosophy was founded in 1875 by Helena Petronvna Blavatsky in New York with the assistance of two Americans, Colonel H. S. Olcott and William Q. Judge. Blavatsky, a Russian emigrée who fled an arranged marriage in the mid 1800's, had devoted her life to studying Buddhism in India and near-eastern religion in Egypt. Her movement was one of many that developed in the atmosphere of interest in spiritualism and psychic phenomenon. Theosophy, though, was more comprehensive than many of its competitors. The aims of the movement were sweeping:

1. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color.
2. To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.
3. To investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.[1]

The vagueness and diversity of goals were, though, to seriously

cripple the harmony of the movement.

Theosophy, as the name implies, claimed to incorporate the wisdom of all religions. Blavatsky's extensive writings, of which the most substantial were Isis Unveiled (1887) and The Secret Doctrine (1888), were purported to be based on an ancient manuscript, The Book of Dzyan. She informed sceptics that this mysterious book would shortly be found by others, but no one has ever reported such a discovery. The thrust of her vision was that mankind had just passed the midpoint of a spiritual evolution from the state of a monad--a single particle--to some future state that could not be currently revealed or understood. Planets also evolved, and man's ancestors had come from Venus. Man was presently in the fifth sub-race of the Fifth Root-Race of the fourth world period. All categories had--in common with most mystical systems--seven steps.

Spiritual evolution stressed reincarnation as the basis of growth. Although man was only visible to others during physical life, he also enjoyed existence on the astral plane--the disembodied state where emotion and passions were dominant--and in a purely mental state. The goal of spiritual evolution was to decrease the amount of time spent in the astral state and prolong the mental life. Adepts could strive towards this goal by controlling their passions while on earth. All men would eventually achieve the perfection of pure mental existence independent of the physical body, but some advanced more quickly than others. For those desirous of accelerating their progress there were beings who had already achieved a state of nirvana and were willing to appear to adepts and advise

them. Blavatsky reported that her own master, Khoot Hoomi, appeared frequently to offer her guidance.

Theosophy, with its motto that "there is no religion higher than truth," was devoted to the further study of this cosmic outlook. Indeed, as Edward Albertson notes in Theosophy (1971), the movement contains elements of philosophy, religion and science. It was a philosophy since it presented a theory of the creation and the purpose of life and, although non-rational, a certain epistemology. As a system which offered to provide an accelerated means of reaching perfection it was also a religion. But, most curiously, it also has elements which are scientific, or at least quasi-scientific. There is no sudden illumination which transforms the devotee into a state of bliss and harmony with the universe--only an almost innumerable series of gradual steps towards ultimate perfection. Theosophy also encouraged the studies of various religions, all of which were perceived to be imperfect and incomplete reflections of the original wisdom and to collections of data on psychic phenomena which would explain (and incidentally give credence to) the existence of life beyond the physical state.

Theosophy is a curious compendium of the occult and rational. It was rooted in the interest in eastern mysticism and the occult but it also mimicked the Victorian tendency to classify and create detailed hypotheses. The study of ancient beliefs parallels J. G. Frazer's exploration of primitive magic in The Golden Bough. Concern with the nature of the universe parodies the serious work of astronomers and physicists which culminated in Einstein's theory of relativity. It is, therefore, a curious fin-de-siècle attempt to

combine the new advances in cultural studies and science with a yearning for spiritual certainty.

In 1879, four years after the founding of theosophy in New York, Olcott and Blavatsky established their headquarters in Madras, India. Five years later Blavatsky had a triumphal tour of Europe, but her reputation was clouded by charges that she had created psychic phenomenon in a fradulent manner. After an investigation, the British Society for Psychical Research concluded that "for our own part, we regard her neither as the mouthpiece of hidden seers, nor as a mere vulgar adventuress; we think that she has achieved a title to permanent remembrance as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors of history."[2] She resigned from the leadership of the movement, and Olcott became director at Madras.

In sympathy with Blavatsky, the other founder, Judge, created an autonomous American section in 1888. The same year Blavatsky organized an "Esoteric Section" in London which stressed "the fundamental assumption that spiritual and intellectual evolution is as much under Law in its processes and resultants as physical evolution, and that the latter is but the shadow or the reflex of the mental, as the mental is of the spiritual."[3] There were further battles against newspaper ridicule and conflicts within the movement itself. Judge, for example, was accused of forgery in 1894 after he produced what he claimed were handwritten letters from the Mahatmas, the extra-terrestrial masters.

Blavatsky died in 1891 without a recognized successor as the

spiritual guide of the movement, although she predicted that the next "messenger" would arrive in 1975. On his death, five years later, Judge was replaced by Katherine A. Tingley as head of the American group, a lady who disagreed with his defence of Blavatsky and was more interested in the psychic presence of occult forces than in the study of religious similarities or spiritual evolution. The third founder, Olcott, died in 1907 and was succeeded at Madras by Annie Besant, who was also attracted to the occult. Her inclination was more towards Hinduism than Buddhism, and she became obsessed with the idea that an avatar would soon lead willing disciples. Besant's choice, Jeddu Krishnamurti, denied that he had special powers and denounced theosophy in 1929; believers were thrown into confusion. This short, but complex, history was inherited by the Canadian theosophists who established an independent national section in 1919.

While Blavatsky's writing was diffuse and convoluted, she did represent the most intellectual and least faddish theosophical thought. This synthesizing of religious ideas, the concept of spiritual evolution, and the stress upon a mystical appreciation of reality were more complex and less subject to ridicule than the excesses of Besant and her assistant, C. W. Leadbeater. In The Inner Life (1910), the latter offered an example of the claim to omniscence which was not credible. The inhabitants of Mars, for example, were described as "somewhat Norwegian in appearance," dressed in brilliant colours and "very fond of flowers" (V. 1, p. 278). The followers of Judge and Blavatsky tended to be less volatile and more learned in their pursuit of knowledge than the other theosophists who were interested

in the occult and new sects.

The Canadian section, led by Smythe as secretary and as editor of the Canadian Theosophist, was loyal to the Blavatsky-Judge faction. Smythe himself had met Judge in 1884, while living in Chicago, and had followed his orientation. The passions aroused by the conflict are evident in William Mullis' "The Forgotten!" in More "Words, Words, Words" (1931). The poem is a tribute to Blavatsky.

> One who gave all she had in life, for those,
> Who never knew the lofty soul who came,
> To leave instructions vital, vast; which glow
> With righteous vigor, and, as years roll on,
> Strike imprint deep in all who read and know.
>
> To learn, we all must mingle with the woe
> That greets us when we venture on the Path.
> For then we glimpse the law: can meet the foe
> Who sows confusion: and fear not his wrath.
> Her's was the fate all martyrs gladly meet:
> She paid the price: was stoned, defamed and cursed.
> Her work lives on, for it is Truth; 'twill greet
> In years to come, all who have earned it, first (pp. 5-6).

Feelings were also strong within the other main faction. When Tingley succeeded to the leadership of the American section she led an attack on Smythe which climaxed with the incantation of a ritual curse of damnation upon the future Canadian theosophical leader.

Smythe survived and became the major intellectual force behind theosophical learning in Canada. A newspaper editor and occasional poet, he was born in Ireland in 1861. After several years in Chicago he settled in Toronto in 1889. Although he was initially engaged in real estate sales, he became a reporter for the Toronto World and Globe. From 1907 to 1920 he was the chief editorial writer for the World, and from 1928 to 1934 served as editor of the

Hamilton Herald. Like F. B. Housser, the financial editor of the Toronto Star, and Bertram Brooker, the vigorous partner in an advertising agency, he combined his mystical avocation with a very practical orientation towards the mundane world. He founded a theosophical lodge in Toronto in 1891 and contributed, from 1908 to 1920, a twice-weekly column--"Crusts and Crumbs"--to the World in order to advocate his theosophical outlook.

In the first editorial of the Canadian Theosophist, for March, 1920, Smythe reiterated Blavatsky's evolutionary concept of the soul and expanded on the theosophical perspective of reality.

> The Self, which remains and returns again, knows that its millennial striving has due effect, and it is not troubled about immediate results. Petty minds seek an end. There is no end in the Eternal. Unfolding Life, forever new, forever free, is the immediate secret. The pulse of the Eternal never ceases to beat. The Divine Heart never ceases to transmute its mysteries into magical dreams of form and colour.
>
> Our differences are in our dreams, the illusions of our day-to-day conceit and ignorance and fear. When we pass beyond these and begin to understand the vast symbolisms of Divine Life in the universe, we approach the secret of secrets in the central Invisible Heart that would make us all one in its Love and Wisdom (CT1:2, Mr 15, 20).

Twenty-four years later, in "All Life is a Unity", he continued to stress the esoteric nature of his beliefs: "big and bigger worlds carry on the processes of life on a scale so far beyond our perceptions of things that it is useless to talk to ordinary people about them." In the present life, on earth, which is "the lowest plane of manifested life," consciousness is expressed through personality which is "only a temporary expedient, a mask." In common with other theosophists, Smythe descried the fear created by established churches with their threats of damnation. Evil, he argued, was

comprised of "falsehood, hate, jealousy, envy and anger." He believed that "the only hell we have to fear is the hell we create in our own hearts." Perfection was a creation of individual will, stripped of all selfishness and ambition.

Smythe's stress is upon the personal control of destiny in a universe which is much more complex than is the traditional dualistic conflict between good and evil, or God and Satan. Hell is within the individual, but so is the potential for perfection. Although this spiritual goal could be conceivably achieved in one lifetime, the process is normally longer. Smythe concluded by restating his own central understanding of the teachings of theosophy:

> after many incarnations in which one weakness after another might be eliminated and replaced by a corresponding strength, it teaches that man can renounce the glories he may have won, may leave heaven or Nirvana, the peace that passes understanding, and return to earth, either in a new incarnation like Jesus, or on the astral plane without a physical body, but using his inner body, so that he can as a redeemer help and oversee the men whose condition warrants such assistance. To do this one must spend many incarnations in preparation and cultivate selflessness and renunciation as a rule of life (CT25, Commemorative Supplement:23, O 44).

This passage sets out the goal of spiritual perfection with relative clarity.

This extensive theory was supported by the travel and proselytizing of key members. Roy Mitchell, in particular, toured across the country promoting the Little Theatre movement. Deacon's extensive contacts and Harris' prestige as a painter were also valuable. Stephen toured British Columbia giving school readings of Canadian poetry. The location of annual C.A.A. conventions in

different cities each year provided the opportunity for contact between the Vancouver group and other sympathetic poets throughout the country. Within the boosterish Canadian culture of the 1920's, theosophists held central roles, allowing them to assert their influence and be recognized as logical manifestations of the renaissance in Canadian art and literature.

This is one of the most curious phenomena of the interwar period. A group of respected leaders in Canadian culture were, simultaneously, promoting an odd synthesis of hoary religious thought, ethical philosophy and quasi-scientific method. Their movement had suffered from internal dissension and external ridicule, but a committed core of believers--with views ultimately antagonistic to the idealist and national culture--functioned symbiotically with this culture. Their constant activity never resulted in wide-spread conversion, but they did produce their own criticism, art and literature as embodiments of their more general outlook.

II

Theosophy, despite its arcane beliefs, did share certain similarities with the idealistic culture, although the qualifications or disagreements are most significant. The theosophists agreed that the poet had a role which was distinct from the concerns of the material world, but the poet was also conceived to be a prophet, a revealer of truth, not only an apostle for an ennobled reality. These poets did share the nationalist fervour but they were also able to consider their work in an international and historical framework;

the west coast writers also focused on regionalism. They exploited the Canadian literary tradition but did so more selectively and effectively than the idealists; the theosophists used the past poetry as the basis for new developments in theme rather than as a model for imitation. Their affinities with idealism, though, are most clearly evident in their reaction to modernism. The conclusions are similar, although the perspective is different.

Theosophists were able to direct their energies more effectively than the idealists because of a more concerted focus. Idealist responses to threats against their vision of reality were more fragmentary, occasional and particular. Theosophy stressed the long-term, rather than immediate, goal of brotherhood. This emphasis was also directed towards the spiritually elect rather than to all men. Therefore, they were less dispirited and disillusioned by the increasing cynicism and machiavellianism in world affairs during the 1930's. In the confrontation with evolution the idealists attacked, but the theosophists transcended the battle because they believed in a spiritual evolution--through reincarnation--which made particular physical mutation or change less than significant. The quasi-scientific approach of theosophy in psychic research also held out the hope that evidence would eventually show Darwinianism to be a very partial description of reality.

Theosophists emphasized the poet's role even more intensely than the idealists; they recognized the poet as the source of spiritual enlightenment. Bucke's Cosmic Consciousness (1901) had advanced Whitman as "the best, most perfect, example the world has so

far had of the Cosmic Sense," a man who "referred to its facts and phenomena more plainly and fully than any other writer either ancient or modern" (p. 186). Bucke's work, which Lawren Harris considered to be the greatest book written by a Canadian (CB6:38, F 24), suggested the link between the visionary outlook and poetry. The implications of Whitman's attempt to embrace a continent and a new society with an overarching synthesis were evident to the Canadian theosophists.

Theosophy also provided specific direction for the poets. Each segment of time was dominated by a ray, which had an influence over activity similar to the power that zealots believe astrological ages to wield. Blavatsky taught that the fourth ray--which encouraged harmony and beauty--had been dominant from the fourteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. This period, therefore, excelled in the creation of well-proportioned and exquisite music and literature. The present age was ruled by science, but in a few centuries devotion would be the keynote. While psychic research fulfilled theosophical homage to science, the writers gazed towards the future. They were prophets because they were precursors of the age to follow the present.

Nationalism is a more complex area of theosophical response. Many comments indicate a desire to create a distinct Canadian literature. Arthur Lismer, sympathetic to the movement, discussed this aspect of art in an article for The Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928/1929 (1929), which was edited by Brooker. Art, he argued, was "the totem of our tribe" (p. 66), the mystical expression of the fundamental essence of a people. In the same volume, Harris described

the basis of a nationalist approach. Canadians, within this orientation, lived "on the fringe of the great north" and were transmitters of "its spiritual flow, its clarity, its replenishing power" (p. 182). Brooker concurred: the Canadian spirit was a "response to the new, the natural, the open, the massive" (p. 17).

Canadian identity was also defined in contrast to the United States. Smythe commented that "Canada has a different dharma, a different duty, or destiny, or ideal" (CT1:3, Mr 20) in "Canada and the United States". Harris was more chauvinistic, asserting that "our population is sparse, the psychic atmosphere comparatively clean, whereas the States fill up and the masses crowd a heavy psychic blanket over nearly all the land" (CT7:85, Jl 26). Cecil Williams argued that Canada was "the race of which Whitman sang" (CT5:3, Mr 24). Housser argued that Canada had a glorious future, suggesting that the Rocky Mountains were one of the "sacred and occult centres of the earth," probably visited by Blavatsky and mentioned by the Mahatmas. He stated that all great religions were born in "austere and inaccessible regions," offering hope that the Rockies would duplicate this pattern and provide a new messiah (CT8:82, Jl 27).

The stress upon Whitman was clarified by Herman Voaden, the producer, writer and anthologist of Canadian plays who was also closely linked to theosophy: "our idealism is as fresh and untrammelled" as Whitman's was in the United States half a century earlier, he argued in Six Canadian Plays (1930), and added that the north "makes the greatest contribution to our spirit" (p. xix). This parallel demanded

that Canadians be sensitive to these psychic influences and recapture the scope and vitality of Whitman's vision. Contemporary developments in British and American poetry were not significant--and were even destructive--because they represented the emanations of other psychic atmospheres. This perspective encouraged nationalism. Voaden asserted that "as yet our literature has been too derivative" (p. xix) and Brooker argued that "universal standards" are only "the art-shibboleths of two or three centuries of European culture" (p. 8).

The most detailed critical attempt to define the distinct nature of Canadian writing was Lionel Stevenson's Appraisals of Canadian Literature (1926). The book stressed the largely unsettled nature of the country, anticipating Harris' concept of the psychic energy of the "great north" and suggested the corollary that Canada was a haven from the increasingly industrialized and cynical milieus of older cultures. Nature was the primary feature in his argument. "To a Canadian of poetic perceptions," Stevenson wrote, "nature is an entity, embodying vast and inconceivable forces, shadowing forth some mighty purpose beyond human comprehension" (p. 78). He stressed a nature which is violent, rather than bucolic, and which challenges and humbles man:

> the inhabitants seem to be precariously perched on a monster not yet conscious of their presence, and if they were to relinquish the perpetual effort of maintaining a foothold their mushroom cities and sporadic cultivation would vanish more rapidly than they have appeared (p. 41).

Nature underlines, as Smythe's theory does, the essential insignificance of the apparent and the danger to the soul of concentrating only on

material accomplishments.

Appraisals of Canadian Literature combines the distinctive Canadian atmosphere with the theosophical ambivalence towards nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Stevenson suggests that the new Canadian society has created a "revaluation of mental equipment by fresh contact with the primordial natural forces." The poets are placed in "circumstances approximating those of the primitive myth-makers" (pp. 27 and 39). These comments suggest a return to older values, through which Canadian writers would be able to recapture an earlier perspective, but he also argues that "boundary lines have no existence for the things of the mind and imagination" (p. 4). Brooker supported this latter view in Open House (1931) by emphasizing the importance of myth and symbol:

> the function of the artist is to see things in a new relationship, detached from his own puny affairs and desires, so that they take on the grandeur of symbols of movements, adjustments and laws that are universal, unattached to any particular time or place, and related only to the boundless and yet unified Being which is the central Myself of Life (p. 101).

There is, therefore, an awareness that the contemporary nationalism had to be held in its proper perspective. Although the poets could respond, as creatures temporarily enclosed in a particular time and country, to the distinct features which accompanied their present incarnations, they must not mistake nationalism for the ultimate goal. While theosophy did tend to isolate them from changes in contemporary thought, it also kept their attention focused on larger cycles and more important concerns than the state of Canadian culture during the interwar years. Nationalism was a portion of the current spiritual adventure but only a fragment of ultimate reality.

This lack of complete devotion to nationalism allowed alternate approaches to literature. The regional orientation, which was useful to the west coast poets, combined the pride which others expressed solely in nationalism with an awareness of larger patterns of thought. The central concepts of this outlook are expressed in A. M. Stephen's doctrine of "neo-Paganism", advanced in "The Western Movement in Canadian Poetry": "A nucleus of new Canadian literature virile with promise for the future" was being created in the west, he argued (DR5:21, Jl 25). He reiterated the contrast with American literature, which is declining because "the spiritual forces have become materialized, and have aroused emotional and psychic storms resulting in the turgid stream of free verse in which sex, the animal passions and decadent mentality are prominent features" (213). Other cultures, he continued, were too concerned with proletarian ideas, causing them to sink into materialistic concepts of history and to be subjugated to economic determinism. But, to his mind, western Canada had escaped these difficulties because it was the point "where East meets West, the spiritual ideals of the Oriental philosophies are modified solely by the virile, red-blooded healthiness natural to a pioneer community" (213). Stephen defined this attitude as neo-Pagan, defending it from the stigma of Paganism by denying any affinity with lust or cruelty.

He also asserted that great poets--in common with seers and prophets--are always pantheists and affirmers of life, "as opposed to the negation thereof contained in creeds and theologies": "this affirmation of Life as opposed to Death, of Expression as contrasted

with Repression, is neo-Paganism" (212). The argument illustrates a belief in philosophical systems united with an acute sense of physical environment and social activities. The stress upon life and sensory experience also provided a counterbalance to the tendency of mystics to become ethereal and vague. Although lust was destructive, love was positive.

This regional impetus could be explained also in more mundane terms. The logical analogue is the incisive discussion by A. G. Bailey--"Creative Moments in the History of the Maritime Provinces".[4] In his article Bailey suggests that Fredericton flourished as a centre for poetry during the 1880's because the city had imported and adapted a culture from English and American sources to counteract the threatening environment. The New Brunswick writers, including Roberts and Carman, were surrounded by alien French-Canadian lumbermen. In Vancouver the poets were precariously perched on a delta of alluvial silt. Beyond Vancouver Island was the ocean and a polyglot threat of overwhelming numbers of people with alien cultures. Behind them were the mountains. (One wonders, indeed, if Stevenson is actually describing the precarious establishment of settlement on the Canadian shield or the geographical and cultural atmosphere of his childhood in Appraisals of Canadian Literature.) The writers were also working in an area which had imported Canadian and traditional English-language culture but was not yet large enough to contribute to the mainstreams of these cultures in competition with larger metropolitan centres. Conditions were optimal, therefore, for a new departure, a new emphasis. This attempt to develop a distinct culture nurtured on the

west coast is one of the most interesting dimensions of theosophical poetry in Canada.

As the theosophists were able to make more complex responses to the nationalism which eventually had a stultifying effect on the idealist poets, they were also able to use the past more wisely, avoiding the danger of adopting traditions as models for the present. The most striking feature of this tradition that is relevant to theosophy is that it lacked an established classical or academic native school which would mitigate against idiosyncracy. However, the personal and synthetic dominated. Deacon, for instance, pointed to the pre-eminence of the Confederation poets during the 1920's: "their very eminence has precluded there being any particularly distinguished writers until we get down to persons twenty and thirty years their juniors" who were "young enough not to have been overshadowed" (SN41:8, Ap 10 26). The McGill poets, who introduced modernism into Canada, were not established as a significant Canadian voice until the late 1930's. The British academic tradition was fostered by the universities, and by the Dalhousie Review and Queen's Quarterly, but the discussions of Hardy, Housman and minor post-Victorian poets did not have a wide audience or extensive imitation in Canada. The majority of poetry, fueled by the nationalism of the C. A. A. and the Canadian Bookman, was romantic. Poets attempted--unsuccessfully--to repeat the triumph of the members of the Confederation group (Roberts and Carman) who were closest to their own outlook.

As Lorne Pierce noted, Roberts revealed a vision "of man in

mystical union with the cosmic mind and energy of the vast Over Soul" in some of his poems.[5] "Beyond the Tops of Time", "O Solitary of the Austere Sky" and "In the Wide Awe and Wisdom" illustrate this tendency. But Roberts' vision was not sufficiently intense for the theosophists, particularly since they perceived him to be asserting nationalism in later years. The New England transcendentalism which had influenced his writing was also considered to be obsolete. Despite Roberts' popularity, Stevenson attacked him in "Manifesto for a National Literature" (1924) as the head of the patriotic school of Canadian poetry which "has had its day" (CB6:46, F 24). A. M. Stephen believed that Roberts had "failed to grow with the years" (QQ36:50, Wint 29). This judgment was based on the theosophical belief that the "great poet is the interpreter," who is concerned with the esoteric, or mythic, significance of nature (63).

The theosophists were more sympathetic to Carman. The Vancouver Poetry Society, which included Fewster, Dalton and Stephen, lionized the poet when he read on the Pacific Coast, and after the poet had died Smythe wrote an extensive defense of his work. For a brief period Carman--always willing to please--seems to have come under the influence of some of their teachings. His poem "Shamballah" is based on the Secret Doctrine's belief in a sacred retreat. In a review of Wild Garden, Smythe argued that "a spirit of a true Theosophy underlies his best work" (CT10:113, Jl 29).

Although Carman's own beliefs (presented in four collections of essays) were distinct from the theosophical doctrines, he did share important ideas with these writers. He accepted the doctrine of reincarnation and constant spiritual potential for growth and stressed

in The Friendship of Art (1904) the importance of art as "the embodiment of man's aspirations and ideals."[6] In The Making of Personality (1908) he added that art was "a paper lantern, perishable but indispensable, whose flame is goodness, whose light is truth, whose sides are patterned with shapes of beauty, and whose office is to illumine and make festal for us the rough and devious road to perfection" (p. 269). He also asserted, in The Kinship of Nature (1903), that "art is a means of communication for the whole being," the mind, body and spirit (p. 151).

The main stress in Carman's prose writing is upon the harmony of these three aspects of man. The Making of Personality propounded "a triune ideal of normal well-being and happiness" (p. v) which was based on the "three fold perfectability" of the personality in "the different but inseparable realms of spirit, mind, and body" (p. 5). His system, which Carman described as "triunistic or unitrinian," was suggestive and vague rather than rigorous or philosophical, an expression of the "Personal Harmonizing" taught by Mary Perry King--whom Donald Stephens has called the "Madame Blavatsky of his life."[7] The arts followed this triune diversity because, as he claimed in The Friendship of Art, they "indicate the presence of an instinct for truth, an instinct for goodness, and an instinct for beauty in the people which produced them" (p. 80).

Although Carman's system ignored the mystical range of theosophical doctrines, he did believe in previous spiritual life. In The Kinship of Nature one reads that "the soul has memories of regions and lives of which we have never heard. The soul dwells with us as

tacitly as a silent companion, who should share our habitation for years, yet never reveal the secrets of his earlier life" (p. 152). The "cosmic spirit" is contrasted with the "contemporary spirit" in The Friendship of Art. "The teaching of the cosmic spirit," he believed, "is the power of humanity's better self accomplishing large purposes, fostering lofty aims, keeping in sight pure ideals, and pondering on the past and the future while it still must toil in the present day." The cosmic spirit is "the genius of discovery and art and invention" (p. 56).

Carman is closest to the theosophists, though, in his belief that art based upon instinct contains the highest wisdom. "Great works," he remarked in the same book, were "produced by men whose interest in life was greater than their interest in their art" (p. 135). "Great human emotion" is more significant and important than technique. Art, he added, "must present the ideal at least as vividly as it does the real, for the one is as important as the other" (p. 120). The "best art and literature" also "foretell and direct progress" (p. 116).

Carman's outlook partakes of the vagueness and diffusiveness of the idealistic outlook of the 1920's, but his affinities with the theosophists are evident. The hint of reincarnation, the belief that art is prophetic and central to expression of instinctual truth ("Follow your instinct: Be yourself, and you'll be somebody" he promises), and his stress upon the present as only a moment between an immense past and future are not incompatible with theosophical tenets. His own popularity in Canada during the 1920's and the re-statement of his ideas in public lectures created an atmosphere

which was not unfriendly to mystical or cosmological verse. Many Canadians shared R. H. Hathaway's belief, expressed in an obituary tribute, that "this Canada of ours has produced in him a poet whose name is not unworthy to be linked with the greatest names in our common English tongue" (CB 11:158, Jl 29).

By attacking Roberts--who was more austere and logical--and promoting the mystical writing of Carman, the theosophists attempted to influence the public perception of poetry. If Carman was the greatest Canadian poet, then his subject matter must be considered to be the essence of great poetry. This orientation assured a sympathetic public for meditations formulated by the theosophical writers. The true function of poetry was perceived, therefore, to explore the macrocosmic questions of man and the universe. The theosophists exploited Carman's popularity.

Further fashions in Canadian poetry also aided the theosophists. The influence second in importance to, and subsequent to, romanticism in Canadian poetry was that of the Celtic Twilight school which encouraged evocative, dream-like language and permitted spirits to roam the landscape. Marjorie Pickthall, who died in 1924, had gained a popular success with precious poetry influenced by this movement and she had numerous imitators. The tendency of this faction, particularly in the verse of untalented poets, was to lessen the desire for vivid and direct representations of nature and to create a tolerance for (and even a passion for) misty panoramas of soulful yearning. This factor, combined with the stress upon Carman's meditations, led to a climate in which theosophical poetry did not

seem as exotic and alien as it actually was.

Carman's verse is evidence of the urge to develop new philosophies, but there were also other precedents in Canadian writing for explorations of psychism, increased awareness, synthetic systems and mystical poetry. Flora MacDonald's Mary Melville: The Psychic (1900) is a dramatic, but true account by the mother of Merrill Denison, the playwright, of her own sister. The girl married a teacher who was also endowed with "mystic power" (p. 43) and researched perpetual motion (p. 222). Her own gifts were evident as a child, when she told her father "I sometimes start to read a book, and as soon as I start a page, I know all that's on it" (p. 76). She was able to hear the "music of the spheres" (p. 114) and hold live coals for the entertainment of guests at a party (p. 144). "So real to me is the life outside the body," she felt, "that I could almost wish to lay it aside now" (p. 217). This choice is finally made when she suffers a cataleptic fit and dies. Her doctor explains that her mind has left her body of its own choice, causing the body to chill. "She came too soon, just as others had before her," he says. "What the crowd hisses today is often the glorious truism of to-morrow" (p. 264). The novel, therefore, is a prophecy of future psychic powers for the majority of individuals.

Richard Maurice Bucke's Cosmic Consciousness (1901) expresses a similar hope for the future. A psychologist who became superintendant of the Provincial Asylum for the Insane in Hamilton, Ontario, Bucke described his own experience at a third level of awareness, which was beyond the perception of simple or self-consciousness. This third level--a "cosmic consciousness"--

> shows the cosmos to consist not of dead matter governed by unconscious, rigid and unintending law; it shows it on the contrary as entirely immaterial, entirely spiritual, and entirely alive; it shows that the Universe is God and that God is the universe, and that no evil ever did or ever will enter into it (p. 17).

He asserted that this consciousness was a new human faculty which would eventually become general in the human race, in the same manner as colour vision and a musical sense had previously developed. Since this new awareness was still rare, Bucke predicted that it would be most likely to occur in a person of good physical and mental health who was at maturity--the age of thirty-five.

The signs of a cosmic consciousness were described in mystical terms. Initially, the recipient had "a sense of being immersed in a flame, or rose-colored cloud, or perhaps rather a sense that the mind is itself filled with such a cloud or haze" (p. 60). This experience is accompanied by a sense of "joy, assurance, triumph, 'salvation'" (pp. 60-1) and an "intellectual illumination" which realizes "that the universe is so built and ordered that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all; that the foundation principle of the world is what we call love, and that the happiness of every individual is in the long run absolutely certain" (p. 61). Other effects of the enlightenment are a sense of immortality, no fear of death, lack of a sense of sin and an added charm for the individual's personality. Bucke's description, lauded by the theosophists, was a detailed presentation by a psychologist for the existence of mystical awareness.

William Douw Lighthall, the poet, anthologist and politician, also was interested in worlds beyond the material. He focused on

the idea of an "outer consciousness" to develop a theory of psychology based on evolutionary lines. In The Teleology of the Outer Consciousness (1924), he asked "is it too bold a hope that this theory of an outer centre of consciousness"--an infinitely greater awareness than individual consciousness--"may offer a field of detail and discovery in evolutionary psychology not unworthy of a human place beside the other fields now so well explored" (p. 10). His outlook is expressed more specifically in The Outer Consciousness and a Future Life (1925):

> as man is a colony of lesser beings, so the Outer Consciousness is the colony of all the living beings of the protoplasmic line....Our true deep life is in it....It is a biological entity, not an intellectual abstraction, like the Absolute. The babe is an example of a human creature entirely controlled by the Outer Consciousness. The "hyperpsyche" is striving, like the individual, for happiness. Evolution is the name for its wider action; instinct, function, willing, etc., are names for the limited forms of it (p. 3).

These ideas are reiterated--to stress the pantheism and common identity of all men--in "The Wind Chant", a poem in Old Measures (1922):

> "Witch-like, see it [the soul] planets roll
> Hear it from the cradle call--
> Nature?--Nature is the soul;
> That alone is ought and all.
> Grieved or broken though the song,
> The fount of music is elate,
> For the Soul is ever strong,
> For the Soul is ever great" (p. 11).

This long poem restates these ideas in a later passage:

> Then as in a glass I knew
> I was vale and town and stream,
> Shadowed grove and n'ern blue
> And the stars that 'gan to gleam.

For the Soul is ever great,
The one Soul within us all;
One the tone that shakes a state
With the helpless cradle-call (pp. 96-97).

Lighthall's approach is evidence of the concern to create a new outlook through a stress upon spiritual evolution.

Albert Durrant Watson (1859-1926) was another pioneer in the search for a spiritual perspective which was not limited by Christianity. His poetry is languid, sentimental and uses hackneyed language, but his eclecticism illustrates the confused searching for alternate faiths in the early twentieth century. Lorne Pierce wrote, in Albert Durrant Watson (1924), that "no man entertains so many strange faces, tongues, sects, systems, enthusiasms, artists, poets and sages, as does he; no home is more an ante-chamber to the universe" (p. 11). Watson's faith included belief in an "infinite number of spiritual states, planes, or varieties of experience"--a concept which is closer to the theosophical belief in gradual perfection than to Bucke's sudden burst of illumination--and that "we enter into and inherit these as we are qualified." Pierce added that Watson "sees the soul of every man climbing the infinite stairway of the stars, and on each plane the mind wins a wider view, higher joy, broader sympathies, deeper experiences and more God-likeness" (p. 10).

The stars were a central feature in the inspiration of the poet, who had served as President of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. "From his patient study of the heavens," Pierce believed, "he is able to clothe his poetry in the very atmosphere of the stellar spaces" (p. 19). They created an atmosphere of "calm serenity" and "peace": "the perfection of peace having become an inviolable law of

mind and spirit. They also sing to him of mutual sympathy and sympathetic understanding, ideas which go to the very roots of his whole social and spiritual philosophy." Astronomy: A Cultural Avocation and Astronomy in a Poet's Life are among Watson's own writings. Study of the skies was symbolic of vision rather than a scientific pursuit for this writer.

In the "Preface" of his Poetical Works (1924) Watson argued that the poet is important because he is a visionary who leads man to a sense of permanence in the universe:

> it is the office of the true poet to give the people a fuller perception of the light. He is more than a technician; he sees. He holds no brief for the past, has no illusions regarding the future. He knows all ages are transitional, and always, to the soul with opening vision, the "Kingdom of Heaven is at hand". The true poet harbours no prejudices and sanctions no hypocrisies. His vision is translated into music and is heard in his song (p. viii).

He consistently follows this stated objective, with an emphasis on the imaginative escape from--or intensification of--reality. The glance is constantly towards the spiritual.

Watson's creed rejects narrow Christian interpretations of truth. "The Dream of God" praises the Baha'i faith and concurs with the theosophical belief that all religions attempt to discover the same essential experience:

> The Christian gives his God another name;
> The Parsi yet another, but the flame
> That kindles love in every soul on earth
> Is in its substance and effect the same (p. 250).

As these lines suggest, his stress is upon man as the centre of perception. He also underlines the potential of each man: "the destiny of every man is leaping/To birth in his own soul" (p. 169).

A section titled "The Immortals", which includes portraits of Sappho, Moses, William Morris, Luther and Alexander Hamilton (certainly an indication of his eclecticism), begins with the assertion that "all men are essentially noble" (p. 265).

Nature has a central importance in his creed, as is evident in "The Lonely Pine":

> Proud and stately, fairest of all,
> One with the heart of the thunder,
> Loved by the poets, sombrely tall,
> Harp of the winds of wonder! (p. 20).

This description of the pine, stressing its vatic nature, is similar to his description of the soul: "a boundless deep, exhausted never/By full discovery" (p. 169). "A Grub With Wings" focuses on the need to strive towards this infinity:

> Oh! Psyche is not Psyche till she flings
> The earth away beneath her flaming wings,
> Or soars into the common, crowded mart
> In mystic veils and halo hues of Art (p. 190).

The concept of inspiration transforming reality is continued in "The Lighthouse", a tribute to Woodrow Wilson as a "beacon" because he strove to create world peace through the League of Nations (p. 101). Similar praise is given to Carman, "a clear-singing trumpet to the listening soul/That hears unseen the truth-releasing word" (p. 104).

This interest in the spiritual role of art is affirmed in "Inspiration":

> I am the fire that glows
> In early kindling dawn,
> I am the wind that blows
> The great life-currents on (p. 120).

In "The Poet's Corner" "the soul eludes the noisy pomp and glare/Of headlines sweeping o'er the page entire" (p. 150), making it approp-

riate that "The Poet's Prayer" seeks a mystical vision which rejects temporal concerns:

> Oh for a gale from the skies,
> And oh for a wind from the sea
> To quicken the soul when emotion dies
> With a breath of eternity!
>
> Oh for a flame of the light
> To show me my life's deepest need,
> To waken my soul from its languorous plight
> And move to immortal deed! (p. 132).

The call for a chance to act--"in immortal deed"--indicates a desire to avoid a totally contemplative life. But Watson is basically a visionary, a contemplative writer, who does not follow this wish.

His vision, therefore, is often nostalgic and is escapist rather than illuminating. In "Weary" he rejects the growing urbanization of Canada, revealing his constant tendency towards sentiment and hackneyed terms:

> I'm weary of the markets,
> Of walls and towers high;
> I long for open spaces;
> I want to see the sky (p. 39).

This feeling of malaise in the present is most violently expressed in "Cry of the Earth":

> Roars the machinery of the city--
> Commerce and noise and war;
> Gentleness, grace and pity
> Crushed by the hammer of Thor;
> Beauty and music and silence--
> God! What is life for? (p. 193).

The obverse of this dissatisfaction with the modern world is a delight in an idealized nature, as in "Sunset in Scarboro" where "the Bluffs like silent sentries gay and sober/Stand lonely in the fading evening lights," and in the trance-like state evoked by "Autumn on the Humber":

And I almost hear the faeries
In their golden sanctuaries--
In the stillness of the autumn by the Humber (p. 20).

These poems indicate the main weakness of the vision in the Poetical Works: Watson's outlook is sincere and spiritual but it also tends towards sweetness. It lulls rather than challenges.

This aspect was ignored by Pierce. In An Outline of Canadian Literature he claimed that "it is no longer possible to consider the literary development of Canada or its spiritual and intellectual progress either, without taking Dr. Watson into account" (p. 8). But contemporary critics and theosophists did not agree that he was pre-eminent. Douglas Bush argued that "Watson merely puts into misty verbiage a yearning to bestow a kiss on the universe" and attacked his "windy dithyrambs and soap-box humanitarianism" (SN41:9, F 20 26). Deacon, the theosophist reviewer, wrote Pierce that he disliked the "Watson influence" in Canadian literature, which he described as "the sweet and innocuous being preferred to the virile" (LP1 0 5 25). This line of attack who also advanced by his sister, Florence Deacon Black, who was a reviewer for the Canadian Magazine. She criticized Watson's Woman (1923) because "the theme is treated in too visionary and too grandiloquent a way to be attractive to this practical age" (CM62:289, F 24). She also attacked his Poetical Works: "force in art must be wedded with grace and infinite skill, qualities akin in human relations, to tact. Goodness cannot be rammed into souls; neither is it attractive as an abstract virtue. Vague dreams of perfection have not the appeal of the definite and practical." She concluded that "it is quite possible for a poet to take himself too seriously"

(CM62:448-49, Ap 24).

These comments illustrate the difficulties with Watson's writing (and with mystical expression in general). For--although the spiritual illumination undoubtedly brings the recipient a sensation of bliss--his poetry must also inspire others to strive for the vision. The simple statement of joy is not sufficient. Watson's verse indulges also in the common tendency to reject the present in favour of the future, creating a nebulous quality in his verse. His language and style lack originality and vigour. He does, however, reflect the concerted search for a new spiritual perspective which would not be solely dependent on traditional Christian teachings--a search that is also reflected in the writing of MacDonald, Bucke and Lighthall.

Although he was a contemporary of the theosophical writers, Robert Norwood (1874-1932) is appropriately considered as the culminating figure in this tradition which provided a basis for the more occult writers. A Nova Scotian, he was deeply influenced and inspired by the mystical strain in the poetry of Carman and Roberts and he was applauded by Watson. Although he was a member of the Theosophical Society, he seems to have had a naive conception of the implications of these beliefs, since he remained a Protestant clergyman throughout his life. His writing is often simple rather than arcane, and he usually stresses values that could be identified with idealism in general as easily as with theosophy. Norwood is confident that the universe is beneficent and revels in the bliss of illumination; and his poetry is direct and dramatic because it stresses the conflict and pain of spiritual development. From His Lady of the Sonnets

(1915) to Issa (1931) Norwood unveils his own spiritual autobiography.

After serving a congregation in London, Ontario, Norwood advanced until he became rector of the prestigous St. Bartholomew's Protestant Episcopal Church in New York, with a large salary and relaxed responsibilities. While in London he joined the local lodge of the Theosophical Society, and his interest was acknowledged by other members of the movement despite his dual and conflicting loyalties to the wisdom of all religions and the particular creeds of one sect. At the time of his death, Smythe wrote that Norwood was "the greatest of our Canadian theosophists" and an anonymous admirer contributed funds to print a special sixteen page supplement of the Canadian Theosophist to commemorate Norwood's life. His two interests are evident in his verse, which is less arcane and more Christian than most theosophical writing.

His Lady of the Sonnets (1915), the first collection of poems, is a guide to the basic elements of Norwood's thought. In the first section, a sequence of thirty sonnets, love is a mystical, ordering force: "Dear, what miracle is this,/Transforming void and chaos with a kiss!" (p. 26). Reconciliation with the spiritual world is achieved through contact with nature when love has faded. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of living fully in the present, an experience that combines ecstasy and pain.

"Paul to Timothy" denies a Puritan conception of Christianity, because "the prisoner of Christ" reveals an almost sensual love for the beauty of Greece. This poem also defines a fundamental dichotomy between force--which is an attribute of Satan--and art--the child of

God. The artist is praised:

> Creators of sweet sounds and lovely forms
> Care not for Babylon; they seek the hills,
> And know God in the thunders of the seas;
> They find him where pomegranate and the pine
> Are passionate with pleading of all souls
> That are with dross of earth unsatisfied (pp. 47-8).

"What is Religion" echoes this love of nature: "word of many creeds/ Blared forth in streets by solemn Pharisees" and "lofty minster-spires/ And rich mosaics on the chancel wall" are rejected as elements of true religion; they are replaced by an appreciation of nature--the recognition of beauty in the commonplace "dusty wayside-flower--and the consistent display of love for others through daily acts (p. 73). "Dives in Torment" explains that the Devil's evil results from a lack of these qualities:

> Hell is for him who hath never found God
> Hid in the bramble that burns by the way;
> Findeth Him not in the stone and the clod;
> Heareth Him not at the close of the day.
> Hell is for him who hath never found Man!
> God and my Brother, I failing to find,
> Failed to find me, so my days were a pain
> Void of the triumph of Spirit and Mind (p. 57).

Norwood's praise of these simple virtues becomes interesting when it is fused with a belief in reincarnation. The sonnet of the title sequence which begins "Sometimes I think that we have lived before" includes an intimation of previous lives at the oars of Caesar's galleys and as servants of Charlemagne:

> Dear Comrade, we have often changed our state;
> We have been slaves and masters, serfs and kings;
> You have been man, I woman, wont to wait
> Upon my lover's word; rememberings
> Are in the mystic rapture that we feel
> Whenever at your feet a while I kneel (p. 10).

The sonnet's suggestion that every role in life has a function in

developing the spirit is given a more direct application in "Reincarnation", which depicts three souls offered the choice of gold, silver and stone chalices. The objects symbolize life as a king, a priest and a slave, respectively. The poet pities the slave, "whose wretched plight/Moved me to pity," until he calls that "things are not what they seem!"--a proverb that would seem to have particular relevance in a world-view which includes reincarnation.

These interests indicate the range of Norwood's thought. The first collection, though, is dominated by tranquillity and a sureness that the universe is good, which is similar to the tone of Watson in his verse. "Fellow Craftsmen" urges men to "have full confidence; and know/Thou and thy God can perfect everything!":

> Throughout the busy day He works with us
> And knows that we are tired; He hears and feels
> The grind of every cog, the plaint, the fuss,
> The purr of pinions in the thousand wheels
> That whir forever down the endless walls,
> Where, as we toil, His light perpetual falls (p. 67).

The Piper and the Reed (1917), however, places a more central stress on the need for man to improve his world. "Te Deum" claims "you who are God--/God in Becoming"--man himself--should rise and "claim/All things as yours" (p. 42). "A Song of the New Gods" includes workers, sailors and prospectors among the new deities but it holds particular affection for "the smiters of tenements--/Lairs of disease, of the white death!" and for "the prophets of labour" who are "the slayers of sweat-shop owners--/The task masters of children" (p. 57). This radical humanism, which denies a God who would curtail progressive social change, is another dominant theme of Norwood's poetry (and of the majority of theosophical writing in Canada).

This second collection of verse includes "A Song of Evolution" --a further elaboration of Norwood's mystical thought. God is described as two lovers "each other eternally wooing:/Love and Life!", who create a child as "a form of the Self once more appearing." Death affects not the self but its "eidolon"--its image or phantom (p. 31). The soul is, therefore, more than a form of individual physical life: it is "a pilgrim/Housed for a night in a hostel" during its time on earth. This attitude leads to a spiritual concept of evolution:

> Atom and star and flesh,
> These are but forms of the Soul;
> Amoeba, mastodon, man,
> But forms of the Soul forever ascending! (p. 32).

"Voice of the Twentieth Century", in The Modernists (1918), develops an explicit faith in purposive evolution and reaffirms the identity of man and God:

> Man's night is now behind him and the day
> Leaps up in glory burgeoning the hills,
> What lies behind us is the nursery...
>
> There is a chord of music from the trees--
> A noise of distant thunder that proclaims
> The coming of the God whose name is Man! (p. 146).

Norwood's poetry escapes the vague, philosophical tone of Watson's verse because of this stress upon the potential of evolution. Since his emphasis is upon the striving rather than the contentment of achievement, he is less prone to create a static image of nirvana. In common with the best theosophical poet, A. M. Stephen, he is aware of the need for social change in order to free man from drudgery and spiritual disillusion. He is careful, in a way which also anticipates Stephen, to stress the physical basis of human emotion and experience. "Moses", in this third volume, declares "God is the thrill of youth's

first kiss of love,/The ecstasy of mothers with their babes" (p. 39).

The untimely death of his own son (and increasing pastoral duties) created a lacuna of six years between Mother and Son (1925), a volume which stressed the social gospel rather than mystical thought, and Issa (1931). The two thousand lines of this final book constitute a spiritual autobiography, emphasizing his own childhood, youth, love, poetry and the death of his son. The name Issa was used to denote Christ when he travelled (as the theosophists believed) to India after his temptations in the desert. Norwood's book, filled with stresses on reincarnation and the development of insight through meditation on common objects, suggests a commingling of Christian and eastern faiths:

> May the rose of Christhood twine,
> All lovely with the lotus, on that stem
> Grown by the Ganges and in Bethlehem! (p. 23).

The immanence of God is restated: each child is a "new Christ" (p. 78).

The nature of poetry is also a salient concern in this long meditation. At the end of Canto I Norwood invokes Carman and Roberts to provide him with inspiration. Poetry, he asserts--in an echo of Shelley--is the result of suffering:

> A poet must be made
> Upon the thorns
> Of life, and, unafraid,
> Salute his morns,
> However horrible the lonely night;
> With laughter, dare the heliconian height (p. 59).

Poetry is also "heaven's last, highest, holiest gift to earth" (p. 59), which is granted to man only when he gains consciousness: "when man's soul had birth." The suffering and the priestly aspects of poetry create a mystical aura around his concept of verse, revealing

"the holy secret of the lyric word" (p. 58). These statements indicate that he agrees that the poet is a central figure in theosophical thought. He concurs with the belief that the poet is the seer, the man who leads others forward in the search for spiritual development.

Issa is, in addition, a final restatement of Norwood's concerns in other areas. He rejects the restraint of contemporary morality:

> How craven is the head
> That cannot bide
> The names of those who bled
> With open side
> For beauty and for truth itself, because
> They failed to live within our narrow laws (p. 69).

He attacks materialism, denigrating the "empty boasting" of a science which attempts to view the earth "only as aeons doomed at last to dust" and "the miracle of man" fated to "but moth and rust" (p. 71). Reincarnation is combined with universal holiness as each child, a "Christ", is seen "blankly staring at a mother's face/As though one half-forgotten truth to trace!" (p. 78). His mysticism, though, is firmly centered in the ecstasy of the present:

> Eternity is one,
> And fluid time
> Rolls on from sun to sun--
> We need not climb,
> The walls of yesterday to find the truth--
> 'Tis ageless, therefore always in its youth (p. 85).

Issa's shorter, varied lines escape the monotony of the mellifluous sonnets and the long forms in His Lady of the Sonnets. The energy of his thought is not dissipated in philosophical verbosity but is offered simply and clearly. The individual words receive greater in-

dividual stress because there are fewer words to contend with. Although the words express a mystical outlook, the images present the mystical identities clearly and vividly.

Contemporary evaluation often recognized this achievement in style and responded to the sincerity of outlook. The Canadian Forum dissented, describing Issa as a "gush of indefinite fluency" (CF12: 151, Ja 32), but other comments were enthusiastic. In the Dalhousie Review, A. H. Moore praised the "lyrical intuition which is the soul of great art," expressing an "intense love of life in all its settings." He asserted that Issa was "the greatest and truest poem which has appeared on this side of the Atlantic in many years" (DR 11:550-2, Ap 32). Roberts added his approval in an introduction to the book, suggesting that--although Norwood had been disparaged as a religious poet--"great poetry has always been 'special pleading', and has always been religious" (p. xiv). Watson had given excessive approval to the poet's work earlier, in Robert Norwood (1923), with the comment that "no Canadian poet excels Robert Norwood in the importance of his message" (pp. 112-3).

Norwood's poetry, specifically in Issa, reflects a continuation of the Confederation tradition through its meditative bias and delight in nature. The belief in reincarnation is ultimately less important than the stress upon humanism and personal spiritual growth. Although his verse does reflect some influences of theosophy, Norwood is, therefore, more a precursor of than participant in the mystical writing. In common with MacDonald, Bucke and Lighthall, he helped to create an atmosphere friendly to theosophical writing.

The enthusiastic praise of Norwood, which was excessive even

by the relatively lax Canadian standards of the interwar period, indicates that he did not suggest any discordant notes to the dominant idealist culture. As The Modernists suggests, modernism was a very limited and timid reaffirmation of timeless humanitarianism and ethical teaching to him. Theosophists concurred with this vision, echoing Carman's belief, expressed in The Friendship of Art, that the greater tradition was towards "gladness and faith and strength," while the lesser was "toward sorrow and doubt and decay" (p. 126). Deacon, the reviewer for Saturday Night, expressed the common Canadian scorn for T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Gertrude Stein. The theosophist poetry, which built on the models of Keats and Shelley, was romantic in form and style. It rejected the new psychological realism and the use of myth and tradition to satirize the present. These responses reflected the popular idealist attitudes, ensuring membership for these writers within the majority culture.

Theosophists, therefore, were recognized as participants in the nationalist and idealist culture of the 1920's. They were, indeed, much closer to the dominant beliefs than they were to modernism. But there were important differences, all related to the distinct orientation of the arcane synthesis. If the theosophists had religiously and consistently followed the teachings of Blavatsky they would have known that their beliefs were ultimately antagonistic to the Christianity upon which Canadian idealism was based. But the Canadian theosophists tended to retain the values of their upbringings; it could indeed be argued that they practised (with Norwood) a very Christianized version of theosophy, except for the spectacular and

scandalous "pagan funerals," which included the novelty of cremation. There were many degrees of theosophy, ranging from the fanatically monastic to the scholarly. Canadian members, at least those who remained in the movement, tended to gravitate to the more conservative extreme. Theosophy provided an extra boost to an idealist perspective; it added an arcane dimension--a type of harmless wizardry or sagacity--but rarely became an obsession. It was, perhaps most accurately, a useful response to the stress which occurred as cherished beliefs seemed to be increasingly precarious and eroded.

For these reasons, theosophists were allied to the idealist culture; but their distinct perspectives also created significant divergences. They were more self-assured and less distressed by contemporary fashions than the idealists, because they perceived that the significance of time on earth was measured in aeons rather than years. They were also less constricted by nationalism: although they were central figures in the attempt to effect a cultural renaissance in Canada, they were also able to retain a perspective, once again, of larger cycles and other nations; this latitudinarian perspective was particularly effective on the west coast, where the regionalism described by Stephen's neo-Paganism was the impetus in the attempt to create a new culture. Theosophists explored the past selectively, adopting only the material compatible with their own interests. The movement itself had been created in an atmosphere congenial to psychic research and new synthetic theories, and the Canadians found precedents in their own country. They shared the common mistrust of nationalism, but their attacks were in the wider perspective of ultimate perfection; daily fashions could be annoying but they did not

waste the same energy that idealists did in deploring the inevitable.

III

The most interesting theosophical writing did occur on the west coast, but the Toronto headquarters of the organization encouraged poetry also. The man who sustained the movement throughout the inter-war period, Smythe, wrote both populist and meditative verse. Lawren Harris tended to acerbity, expressing a cynicism not in tune with the theosophical dictum of charitable brotherhood, but his poetry does reveal the cosmic perspectives of the movement. The most interesting member of the Toronto group, though, was Bertram Brooker. Although he was never an actual member of the society, and many of his personal ideas were developed before he arrived in Toronto, he was associated with leading theosophists in the city and explored a similar outlook in an idiosyncratic and provocative fashion. As a group, the writers illustrate the liabilities of pursuing other careers while using poetry only as an avocation to express particular states of feeling and the problems with finding an adequate and distinctive means of expression in the centre of a declining but dominant culture.

Albert E. S. Smythe (1861-1947) wrote two volumes of verse which are interesting only because of his dominant influence on the theosophical movement in Canada. His poetry, chiefly influenced by AE but without the accomplished creation of mood and judicious use of language, has no fascination for a modern reader and suffers from problems similar to Watson's verse. Smythe's work illustrates that a belief in theosophy was not sufficient for the creation of vigorous

and accomplished poetry. Although he was a leader in the new creed, his verse reflects the old values and a meditative haziness.

Poems: Grave and Gay (1891)--his first volume--includes poems concerned with mysticism, attacks on the modern world, and the conventional theme of unrequited love. Love dominates the volume, but the more interesting poems relate to economic and social issues. Angry attacks on inequality and mercantile greed have a continuing vitality which the more conventional poems lack. A series of "Peanut Ballads" describes the life of the streets--of the men who sell roasted nuts at corners and the existence of the poor in Toronto. "To Certain Merchants of Toronto" is a vision of "bondmen and maids, whose eyes/Turn with the curse of want to you, their foes" (p. 128). This type of writing emphasizes the humanitarian concerns of theosophy which were implicit in the concept of brotherhood that Smythe constantly stressed to the Canadian organization.

The second volume, The Garden of the Sun (1923), is notable for its expression of his theosophical outlook. The theme of "Lilith Redemptiax" includes his interest in unrequited love, but the poem also offers a wider context:

> The lover and the hero bear one heart;
> Hold thyself high and wear the double crown,
> And suffer not at all the world's renown
> To set great Nature and thy soul apart.
> There is love beyond the grange and mart--
> Above the range of vows--for which the frown
> Of custom sets no pale, whose Word brings down
> The ineffable power of Life whence all things start (p. 15).

This vision is expanded in "Death the Revealer" because love is itself reduced--in its human manifestations--to a transitory and ultimately insignificant phenomenon:

For love is but a heart to brood and bleed,
And life is but a dream among the dead
Whose wisdom waits for us. God give me heed
Till the day break and shadows all be fled! (p. 23).

The stress upon the future, as in Watson's verse, is vague and creates a loss of vitality as the future certainty is generalized and philosophical.

Smythe also reveals a simple, homely style in "April": "she is the little maid among the months;/For May braids up her hair, and June's a woman" (p. 36). This idyllic acceptance of reality is a dominant note in the volume. Even the outrage against poverty and exploitation in Poems: Grave and Gay is no longer present. Florence Black praised the book, using terms similar to those which she had used to disparage Watson (although a modern reader might argue that their poetry is very similar) because "through all the poems there runs a pleasant feeling of contentment with the ways of the universe" (CM62:220, Ja 24). The satisfaction, though, causes a lack of force in Smythe's poetry. Like Watson and the earlier mystical writers, he is too sure of eventual bliss to worry about depicting the dynamism of spiritual struggle in growth. Lacking this tension, the poetry becomes too relaxed and vague to create a lasting impression.

Lawren Harris had similar problems in Contrasts (1922). The book employs a vers libre form, with a greater debt to Whitman than to the imagist movement, but his poetry suffers from the philosophical vagueness which has been noted in Smythe's verse. The effect is of a younger voice speaking, but it does not speak with any greater power or much more freshness. Both theosophical interests and his problems of expression are evident in "Blasphemy":

It is blasphemy
To be merely mortal,
To wilt under the weight of the ages,
To succumb to second hand living,
To mumble old dead catch phrases,
To praise far off ways and things and sneer at your neighbour's clumsiness,
To say nay, nay and smile at aspirations, dreams and visions (p. 80).

"In the Heart" is written from the perspective of an inclusive vision, which is enjoyed by a person who has been through numerous incarnations. "I have lived through this many times/So that the way will not be strange nor too hard" (p. 52). Both poems have an unpleasant patrician flavour, which is hectoring rather than persuasive. The vision is olympian but it is also disdainful.

This atmosphere is continued in "Picnic Grounds", which declares that

O, the whole earth where men live
Is like old, stale, picnic grounds,
Robbed of freshness,
Raped of sweetness,
Dying ever so slowly throughout the ages (p. 22).

"The Age" attacks the "miserable glitter" of life, asserting that "this is the age of the soul's degradation" (p. 36) and "What a World" notes the "mad, seething cargo" of humanity (p. 37). "This Fog" regards ideal life as obliterated by a haze:

If this fog would lift but for a moment,
This fog we live in and are lost in, close-hugging us in pain
This seething fog, weighted with prejudices, dense with the close-packed particles of selfishness, crowding vision into blindness,
We would see more strange sights, some wonderful sights--so many welcoming smiles,
And we would hear some strange sounds, some wonderful sounds--so many welcoming voices; such music! (p. 45).

His disappointment is sometimes expressed in terms of contempt for man. "Blasphemy" attacks men who adopt beliefs "like baubles" because they are only "dazzling the attention" (p. 81), but "The Victim" is the harshest poem:

> People must belittle themselves,
> Spit upon themselves,
> Crown themselves with thorns,
> Nail themselves to a cross
> To find themselves--
> Always, there must be a sacrificial victim (p. 60).

These comments are in sharp contrast to Stephen's concern for the individual.

Harris' mystical writing is an escape from this dispirited reality. In "Rhythm" there is delight in larger cycles:

> Life rides a rhythm of births and deaths,
> Comes into the seen,
> Fades into the unseen (p. 84).

A similar process is described for nations, races, lands and worlds. His most mystical statement is in "Time", which is described as "the womb of melancholy" (p. 98).

> Were there no time
> There would be no sadness, no down drag, no melancholy.
> One could go back and forth
> And into, and out of,
> And be all over at once
> Or nowhere--
> Find endless ways of escape (pp. 99-100).

This meditation, though, is as generalized as the attacks upon contemporary life.

Harris' volume, therefore, is dominated by a tone which mocks individual activity. The mystical vision seems to be an escape from life rather than an enrichment of existence. This was one of the dan-

gers of theosophical poetry. It was difficult to convey the intensity of vision without alienating the sympathetic but uncommitted audience. Harris' style is also ineffective because the free verse lines lack even the harmony of Whitman's. They bludgeon rather than sweep on. Contrasts is the least effective Canadian expression of theosophical outlooks.

Bertram Brooker, who is also primarily remembered as a painter, left a more interesting and extensive record of his thought. A critic and poet as well as an artist, Brooker (1888-1955) developed his own outlook while living in Manitoba; but his conclusions and orientations are remarkably similar to the doctrines which Blavatsky had defined, and his work reflects these ideas. When he moved to Toronto he discovered congenial company in the presence of Harris and other theosophical writers active in the cultural life of the city. His poetry written in the earlier, romantic fashion shares the lack of conciseness and static presentation which is evident in the verse of Watson and Smythe. Some of his free verse (although it is better than Harris') is far from accomplished. The interest in developing a mystical insight overwhelms the tentative expression of experience which is normally associated with this form. But Brooker is significant, both for his critical attitudes--which support the ideas of Stephen--and for the fact that he arrived at these positions through his own spiritual searching.[8]

Brooker was a remarkably versatile figure. He introduced abstract art to the Canadian public and was the sole public defender of E. E. Cummings' poetry in this country during the early 1930's. He edited the two interwar editions of The Yearbook of the Arts in

Canada (1929/30, 1936), wrote poetry and three novels. Think of the Earth (1936), which deals with spiritual concerns in a contemporary setting, was followed by The Robber (1949), which traces similar problems at the time of Christ. The Tangled Miracle (1936), written under the pseudonym of "Huxley Herne", was a detective novel. Brooker also had a successful advertising career. He pioneered subliminal techniques in The Art of Subconscious Selling (1923) and wrote a manual on copywriting. These books, and his regular column on the skills of advertising (in a trade journal), were under the pseudonym of "Richard Surrey".

His wide range of interests, and particularly his participation in both practical affairs of business and art, was not unique. The writers who attempted to provide a new direction, to counter the influence of science and materialism, were often also involved in the practical world. The comparison can be made between Brooker and Fred Housser, who was the financial editor of the Toronto Daily Star but also a commentator on current affairs (with a strong humanitarian bias) in the Canadian Theosophist. Indeed, Brooker, under his professional pseudonym of "Richard Surrey", often extolled the social benefits of advertising. "Advertising, The Arch Enemy of Poverty and Disease" suggested that the increased use of soap and toothpaste had increased hygenic standards. This sense of progress suggests a unity of purpose in his activity, although it may be elusive at first glance.

Brooker attacked contemporary rationalism and argued for an intuitive approach which is similar to Carman's but more explicit. He suggested that man's brain, "originally evolving for use as a

tool to keep him alive, to preserve the race, has gone beyond itself as a tool and has become a net in which he entangles himself" (BB C15 25 14). He attacked "this poisonous thing we have called civilization" and suggested that man "has developed cunning instead of claws"; man expresses his viciousness through thought. Man, he also believed, was repressed--dominated by the hope for an unrewarding change; he was "always denying some part of his nature, surrendering what he is, in order to be something which might function in an abstract place or condition which no one can prove." "The power lies in life itself, not outside it," he wrote in the author's preface to "Experience: A Drama in Six Acts" (1929). The play emphasizes that man alone is supreme. Good and Evil are only members of a chorus, "only measures of man's activity, and not absolute or controlling values" (BB C15 25 13).

He shared Stephen's emphasis on the prophetic role of the artist and poet. A note on The Robber claims that contemporary writers were guilty of "betraying the public by contributing to pessimism, bewilderment and a feeling of worldwide helplessness." He believed that "the writer should have helped to maintain values and enthusiasm for life" (BB C15 25 13). Brooker wrote in his "Seven Arts" column--which was syndicated by the Southam newspaper chain--that intuition was the basis of art: "great art cannot be created from the thinking side of our nature. Great art springs from deep feeling" (BB Au 24 29). Another column expanded on this suggestion, distinguishing his ideal of the artist from the contemporary reality. Artists and poets, he asserted, were the "prophets" of the present, who experienced a profound vision: "they are not individuals, in the

ordinary sense. They are so linked with the energy that pours through them that they become isolated from men and live almost constantly in a realm of which they can impart only an occasional glimpse" (BB Jn 15 nd). This is a statement of belief in the vatic role of the artist.

His own search to reach this perspective is expressed in "Self-Portrait: An Experiment in Autobiography". A later synopsis recalls that "it seems that for most of my life I was seeking a true, pure taste of this underived being," which is described as "this ME-in-it-self" unspotted by the world. He learned, though, that "it was not really a Me I was seeking--although it appeared so at the time--but something much less attainable": "a taste of the primal energy of the universe." This search caused him to develop a theory of gravitation, which described the nature of this force. "The nature of each spark, and the sole energy it possessed, was a desire to reach a point which I conceived to be on the opposite side of space." This urge, a "FIRST DESIRE", caused all sparks to move towards the further point

> and my notion was that in converging toward this point a rotation would set up and that this rotation, at times toward the goal--coinciding with the primal movement--could account for the whole of evolution--all rhythmic swings and contrasts--orbits--spheres--seasons--night and day--molecular structure--and, of course, life and death--and the struggle for existence --and finally the variations of mood and mentality (BB G 2-9).

The theory underscores the interest that these writers had in confronting science with its own concepts. While the theosophists suggested that reincarnation (a spiritual evolution) was more significant than Darwinian evolution, Brooker discovered a pattern for life in gravitational theory.

"Biography of a Mind", his most lucid attempt to develop a mature outlook, is less concerned with science and matter, even on the theoretical level: "there is no 'reality'," he argues. "Mental things are alone real, for it can be shown that everything else is structure. There is no such thing as pain and death--these are simply stresses and changes of structure" (BB G2-9). In terms of individuals, this approach suggests that "men are the thoughts of the race they belong to," and that men recur "within the race of men." The reincarnated being bears only "slightly changed relationships to the ongoing history of the race" (BB "Seven Arts", Mr 19 30). Within this racial consciousness nothing is ever lost, although it is often subconscious in the individual. A stress on personal awareness, therefore, is largely illusionary and emphasizes the partial rather than the general: "the consciousness is simply the point or nose or apex of race consciousness within its seeming individuals, nuzzling forward into novel relationships, and sensing only the novelties in its so-called conscious part" (BB "Biography", Mr 19 30).

This argument is applied specifically to art in "Postscript to Possibility", an article stressing the intuitional approach. Although he disapproved of the nationalism of the Canadian Group of Painters as "insular" in a letter to LeMoine FitzGerald (BB D 35, Mr 20 33), he also believed that Canadians had a particularly favoured artistic environment. As Carman did, he emphasized "feeling" rather than training, "from the belief that to know too much about how other people have reacted to nature and to experience is to destroy the freshness of reaction possible to a young people in a young country."

Feeling rather than thought was also stressed in this "Seven Arts" column: "to react to our environment with real feeling, instead of thinking about it as 'subject' for intellectual treatment in the short story, the novel, the painting, sculpture, or what not" (BB Au 14 29). D. H. Lawrence, "who, more than most moderns, possessed a sense of the gift of prophecy," was the model for this approach (BB "Postscript", p. 16).

With his stress upon racial consciousness and on the importance of life over civilization, Brooker combined the belief that art reached back to common experience rather than responded to new conditions. Life in Canada in 1929, he argued, was not significantly different from life in ancient Egypt, Palestine or Greece; Canadians, he thought, could create something "not new--but fresh" (BB Au 24 29). This distinction underlines the conflict between cosmopolitanism and nationalism again in theosophical practice. These writers were committed to a distinct Canadian expression, but this expression was considered to depict only a slightly different aspect of universal truth and wisdom.

Brooker despised the work of T. S. Eliot, whom he described as "a man so unnatural and wrong-headed as to use his undeniable gifts to lead a whole generation astray into his wretched "Waste Land" (BB, untitled, unnumbered essay). He attacked Eliot's intellectual approach, but he was optimistic that artists were regaining, as a group, an instinctual sense: "we relate art and literature more closely to life and religion than has been the custom for several centuries. This is what makes me think," he commented in "Seven

Arts", "that we are on the threshold of another great renaissance, another 'golden age'" (BB Mr 1 30). He elucidated contemporary developments in art for Canadians from this perspective:

> all this seeking and experimenting and groping which seems to us chaotic because we cannot see it "backwards", so to speak, in its right perspective, is apparently merely the first limping of the human spirit in an old, old direction after being crippled for a while by the blows which skepticism, materialism, industrialism and mechanization have rained upon the last few generations (Mr 1 30).

He shared a belief with the idealists that art would lead the rebellion against contemporary society.

His comments on modernism suggested that artists were returning to a "sense of unity." A description of Beauty suggests a similar concern: "beauty leads to life and is the law of life"; it is "the outward sign of inward balance and concord. A thing is beautiful when its parts fit together and work together in perfect kinship" (BB V F_1 "Nine Words"). This stress on wholeness and balance was offered to counteract "an age of analytical criticism" in which "all thought is destructive." Brooker felt that it was a period when "instead of artists we produce cleverists. In the absence of ecstatic inspiration, and amid the roar and rush of our own narrow partisan lives, the soul of man is decaying" (BB11, "Negativism and Art"). While the cleverists "simply play with relationships as with pawns on a chessboard," he also noted in 1929 the pervasiveness of geometric art, which was a return "full circle back to primitiveness." In "Seven Arts", he described these artists as "a few who attempt to build with geometric forms and equations a new conception of the universe and of life, denuded of superstition and transcending human frailty"

(BB J1 27 29).

Brooker's own paintings pioneered the experimentation with abstract forms in this country. Think of the Earth and The Robber explored and embodied his thought. Both books are convoluted with philosophical passages and incidents, but some of Brooker's poetry offers a concise illustration of the application of this style of thinking to literature, particularly as it attempts to capture life with his personal awareness:

> this
> morning i went out
> slowly
> to paint a tree
>
> suddenly i felt
> that for the first time
> i had entered the life
> of these few square yards of earth (BB V D2 Jn 26 28).

The poem stresses the relationship of two trees to each other and to the space which surrounds them, attempting to invoke a sense of wholeness or beauty. The poem also reveals the influence of Cummings, although not his felicity with language, because it combines imagism with attention to the individual stresses of words. The uncapitalized "i" is also significant in terms of Brooker's stress on an instinctual sense of awareness in a common racial memory which dominates individual awareness.

The sparse images reflect a wariness towards language. "Will" asserts "there is nothing in man, except words, that is not in Nature" (BB B13 13); an untitled poem declares "language/what a damned silly short little stick to measure the universe with" (BB C5 18). Another poem echoes A. J. M. Smith's search for a "difficult, lonely music"

which could capture the geometric landscape of the country and its impact on the individual spirit, although Brooker's lines have a more conservative and less striking character:

> let me not be deflected
> let me maintain this
> let me hold myself in this way
> straight
> upright
> soaring (BB B13 13, Jn 26 28).

Another poem offers this response to nature as a whole vision rather than in terms of particular romantic correlatives:

> silently
> during the night
> the first snowfall had covered the trees
> the fences
> the muddy ground.
>
> the young blue spruces and juniper bushes in nearby
> gardens were drooping with the weight of wet snow hanging
> like drapery on ghostly hooded figures
> big feathery flakes danced and dawdled in the air
> a dazzle of whiteness in the early sunshine (BB B13 13).

These free verse poems allow Brooker an elastic form to express his vision through sensual impressions.

But much of his verse is verbose and infused with a didactic aim, similar to the poetry of Watson and without the dramatic qualities which enlivened the verse of Robert Norwood, Ernest Fewster and A. M. Stephen. "To Severla", written for a child who died after two days, focuses on the premodernist and sentimental attitudes of much theosophical poetry:

> And there is left now
> What all life leaves
> A faint stirring down the aisles of memory,
> A dim track branching out
> From the broad path of our lives:
> Ending suddenly (BB C15 25-6).

Many of the later poems are hortatory, reiterating Brooker's own ideas.

"A Man to His Son" testifies

> Once in the hush of sunrise,
> Before the cocks crow,
> Before the cattle stirred in their stalls,
> We could feel the mystery,
> The breath of unending freshness,
> The thrust of ceaseless birth,
> The march of the everlasting onwardness,
> We are old and ready for sleep.
> Build a new bridge to Beauty,
> A new highway to Brotherhood (BB B13 13).

Brooker had emphasized that kinship--described in his definition of beauty--occurred "when its parts fit together and work in perfect kinship." Kinship was also kindness, in the sense that "Fraternity is Mankindness" (BB V F_1 "Nine Words"). This outlook is repeated in his call "for kinship":

> Find fellowship
> Build brotherhood,
> Write "Mankindness" on your outward banners (BB B13 13).

This stress is compatible with the first object of the Theosophical Society--brotherhood.

Other poems stress the freshness of his instinctual approach. "Will" specifically rejects intellectual processes:

> Will in man is energy seeking
> action.
> Thought obstructs action.
> It does not oppose action.
> It has no power.
> It is a lapse of power.
> It is a gap between the impulse to act and the release
> /of action.
> It is a flimsy bridge that often breaks down
> (BB B13 13).

His perspective in "Knowing" is similar, although it is a particular attack on the intellectual concept of an after-life:

> In the invisible we have built a gated, gilded
> after-paradise,
> We cannot recall the green and growing paradise
> our fathers knew aforetime.

The poem also suggests

> we are stuffed with the dried leaves of
> Knowledge.
> Only at dawn, or alone by the seashore, or at
> the hour of death, are we aware of our
> emptiness (BB B13 13).

These attitudes reflect the stress which other writers, particularly Norwood, Fewster and Stephen, place upon the instinctual wisdom of man in contact with nature.

Brooker's verse, though, also has a unique fervency and energy of conviction. "Fellowship" is an example:

> All is fellowship!
> There is fellowship in Light,
> In the first foliation of fire--
> Beam beside beam,
> Wave overleaping wave,
> Plunging out and returning;
> The elemental, illuminate pulse;
> Ray beside ray together and partnered.
> The first foliation of OTHERS--the great WE.

The poem adds that "nothing escapes companionship/No shoulder shakes off the touch of the world" (BB B13 13). "salvation" is a summary of Brooker's ecstatic outlook:

> but there <u>is</u> a salvation
> you've experienced it
> although you wouldn't call it that
>
> you tell me you've experienced
> a sort of release
> from space and time
> from the body
> from matter (BB C5 18).

Although his theories are specific and developed, his goal is mainly illumination--escape from the temporal and material world. In common with theosophists, he seeks a new level of awareness and experience which rejects both established faith and the contemporary world.

Brooker's cosmology is comprehensive and interesting; he is also

particular and thoughtful in discussions of modern art and literature, being the only mystical writer who reveals an intimate knowledge of contemporary developments. Brooker's painting pointed towards later trends, but--like Harris--he is unable to translate this facility in one medium into poetry. His abstract painting may be considered indeed, along with Harris', as an achievement of ideas expressed in one dimension which he could not present as well in poetry.

A few of Brooker's free verse poems do contain a sense of particular time and place and offer specific insights. Often, however, his voice is too insistent and didactic; the ideas could be presented more appropriately in his elliptical prose notes. He lacks a professional attitude towards poetry; the verse indicates the limitations of verse which is written only occasionally and to express a particular viewpoint rather than studied and practised as a serious aesthetic pursuit. Brooker, though, does indicate the extent of influence held by a type of thinking which was theosophical (or uncannily similar to theosophy); his own versatility reveals the extent to which a mystical thinker could participate in numerous areas of activity. Mysticism did not imply retreat from the world but active participation in that world to convert others and to improve the present.

These three poets, though, had fundamental difficulties in expressing their ideas in poetry. In addition to amateurism, they had problems because they insisted on being didactic, ignoring F. R. Scott's stress on the aesthetic integrity of the poem. Poetry was only a secondary or tertiary interest to them. Neither Smythe nor Harris was able to create verse with any more than historical interests to a modern reader. Harris' Contrasts is only a footnote to his im-

portant paintings and it lacks the dedication and energy which are evident in the latter. Similarly, Brooker did not devote sufficient enthusiasm or care to his verse. These three figures are interesting primarily because of accomplishments other than poetry--Smythe for his organizational skill and dedication, Harris for his art, and Brooker for his labyrinth of thought.

IV

The Vancouver poets had the greatest opportunity and success in writing poetry which reflected the distinctive qualities of theosophy in an idealist culture. The isolation from Toronto encouraged an attempt to develop a new perspective that is revealed in Stephen's belief that neo-Paganism was a distinct opportunity for Canadians to synthesize pioneer vigour and oriental understanding. The most rambunctious proponent of this muscular mysticism was Tom MacInnes, whose exuberant pronouncements were not mellowed by studious reticence. Annie Dalton, who was more conservative but equally passionate, created a series of visions to instruct man in his ultimate significance. Both were ancillary to theosophy itself, but Ernest Fewster and A. M. Stephen--actual members--reflected and embellished these perspectives. Fewster tended towards meditative ecstasy, but Stephen had a wider range: morality, modernism, mythology and Indian religion were his main interests. He moulded these concerns into a statement of his theosophical orientation. Within a culture devoted to nationalism, these writers concentrated upon regional expression through the perspectives of arcana and mysticism.

The cultural environment was ideal for a new direction.

British Columbia had been celebrated in language plagiarized from Robert Service. The Cariboo gold rush also focused novelists' attention on the decadently-romantic remittance men. Poets tended to be less specific, usually focusing on the mountains as an incentive to spiritual insight. Typical of this perspective is Amy Roddick's "To the Rocky Mountains", in From Montreal Elsewhere (1929):

> Give to man intenser vision,
> Power beyond the wonderous now,
> Power to delve with holy passion,
> Power to solve his utmost vow.
>
> Shed more lustre on his transport,
> Till his heart be filled with love,
> Fervent love that nears God's purpose
> Through the peaks that tower above (p. 29).

Even Lorne Pierce was moved to ecstasy. He perceived that the mountains "stand tonight, mantled in mystery and imperturbable,/Preoccupied with lofty thoughts beyond the range of man" (p. 46) in a poem quoted by C. H. Dickinson in Lorne Pierce: A Profile (1962). The mystical writers internalized this external stimulus to express their responses to the geography in terms of their own spiritual awareness. The mountains became symbolic of experience rather than overwhelming stimuli. In a rather pallid comment, Nora Duncan's Rainbow Reveries (1934) described Vancouver as the "Fair city of visions and dreams" (p. 64). These writers described the visions and dreams which were possible in the young Vancouver of the 1920's.

Tom MacInnes (1867-1951) accentuates the enthusiasm and mysticism of this period in his poetry. The son of a Lieutenant-Governor of the province, he engaged in capitalist ventures in Nationalist China, became a right-wing agent-provocateur in the province's

labour strife during the depression and offered (in an impoverished old age) to be a nominally paid spy against Mao Tse-Tung's Communist government. Until his spirit was broken by acute alcoholism and constant failure, he promoted trade fairs for Canadian and American businessmen to Pacific Rim countries. He represents, at a more popular and less intellectual level, the tendency of theosophists to look outward and to encompass more than Canada in their experience.

MacInnes was imperturbable in his prime and pretended to greatness and wisdom. He warned Pierce not to "begrudge the time and attention" needed to make his Complete Poems (1923) "letter perfect" because it would be "the first Canadian book to secure the Nobel Prize" (LPM53 F 7 23). He was a philosophical poet with a vaudeville streak who proclaimed "Courage! Cleanliness! Charity!" as the cardinal virtues. Oriental philosophy was the subject of his trifling, rather than careful, study; MacInnes referred to Lau Tze, the Chinese philosopher, as "The Old Boy". In High Low Along (1934) he described Zen Buddhism as "the woodland sense of things" (p. 33). He revelled in immediate sensation and shared Brooker's faith in the primacy of instinct over thought. Although he believed in psychic evolution, MacInnes was at his most characteristic when he expressed the energy and exuberance that Stephen had included in the "neo-Pagan" concept:

> Let saints abstract on subtle planes
> Revolving occult theories
> Unravel all till naught remains,
> And vanish then howe'er they please!
> But as for me, in place of these,

The savor of flesh and blood! The zest
And daze of vast idolatries!
This is the object of my quest.[9]

This verse indicates his exuberance, his carefree paganism and his use of ballad forms. The poetry was not, however, of Nobel Prize caliber.

A more prim and "cultured" tone is present in the poetry of Annie Charlotte Dalton (1865-1938). She was sympathetic to the theosophical outlook and a member of the Vancouver Poetry Society, which was directed by Fewster, although she never actually joined the movement. During the 1920's and 1930's she was recognized as a major native poet in Canada, who had created a spiritual and mythic vision which was relatively comprehensive and developed in language and style when judged by the idealist and romantic standards prevalent in this period. Her poetry explored and described the problems of eternity, spiritual growth and Canadian identity. She was also the least humanitarian of the theosophical poets; although she had an optimistic vision of the development of man as a race, she wanted the present to be orderly and dignified; she had little sympathy--particularly during the depression--for individual men who attempted to improve their living conditions by fermenting social change.

Her dedication to mysticism is illustrated in a letter to Pierce. She expressed an avid interest in Bucke's Cosmic Consciousness and in P. D. Ouspeusky's Tertium Organum. "Anything in the fourth dimension," she wrote, "is an attraction." She also asked if Pierce could recommend further titles (LP2 Mr 22 27). In "The Future of

Our Poetry" (1931) she offered her own criteria. Praising one of Harris' paintings of the Rocky Mountains, she noted the "gifts of spiritual illumination and expression; the extraordinary depth and quality of its feeling; its symbolism; and its wonderful suggestion of light"; she urged that similar goals should be the concerns of poets. Dalton rejected modernist experiences in art: the poet's role was "to define the Eternal" because the poet "alone has a certainty in his heart that the fall of creeds and kingdoms cannot shake" (CA9:18, S 31). This preoccupation (with the poet as "feeler not thinker") dominates her own work, which is an idiosyncratic application--in its central themes--to poetry of the contemporary fashion for spiritual exploration.

Dalton also explained her approach in "Emotion in Poetry" (1925), an article which argued that emotion is "the life of the soul." "Emotion and imagination together," she continued, "are beyond any laws we can make for them. We can but wait patiently for the vision, in the meantime making ourselves worthy to receive it" (CB7:176, N 25). Recognition of her work praised this quality of vision, as is indicated in an obituary which described her as a "true poet and mystic" (CT18:373, F 38). Deacon commented on the "almost clairvoyant qualities of human understanding in her poetry" (LP3 D 28 29). The "rich individuality of her thought, and the breath-taking clarity of most of her images" was noted by Stevenson (CB18:368, Ja 25). A. M. Stephen observed a "passionate faith in Beauty and Joy" (DR5:215, J1 25).

Her poetry is similar to Norwood's in its constant development of theme and style in successive books. Dalton's early poetry also

indicates her later interests. The Marriage of Music (1910) includes the "Ballad of the Lillye-White Flowre"--a pseudo-medieval poem--but it also contains "The Romance of Vancouver", a poem which reveals her interest in mythological treatment of geographical scenes:

> In this Paradise
> Ages Beauty slept,
> And the lions wise
> Still their vigils kept,
> They watched the thrones of Beauty grow
> Above their fastness of sculptured snow (p. 11).

"Is Love a Dream" reveals precious sentiment; but it also indicates the sincerity and intensity of Dalton's emphasis on emotion in verse:

> Is Love a dream? then let me dream,
> And may I never more to life awake.
> Love, clasp me close, let others truth esteem,
> Thou art my all--I, all for thee forsake (p. 7).

Since it attacks materialism and praises the imaginative life, "On Reading E. A. Poe's Sonnet to Science" is another early poem which is significant in her work:

> Nay, tender poet, keep thy golden dreams,
> Thy beautious visions dear to all the earth,
> Thy timid wood-nymphs, naiad-dotted streams,
> Thy magic groves that give the god-like birth (p. 54).

The emphases on mythological scenes, emotional intensity and the primacy of the imaginative world dominate her more interesting verse.

Flame and Adventure (1924) is a specific attempt to present a spiritual concept of evolution, in contrast to the scientific approach. The title poem begins with a description of the original state of man, which is dominated by a lack of power and adaptability rather than by original sin:

> We were the men--abortions of young Time,
> Spewed from th'abhorred, the world's ensanguined slime,
> Hated, and hunted forth from bog and pen
> Naked and homeless--God! and we were men (pp. 2-3).

God is a distant and uninvolved being. Man is solely responsible for his own actions: we "forged our own fetters, called them by thy name,/Limped through the centuries--and whose the blame?" (p. 12). The true God "wakes--and winks a million years away" (p. 21)--an image which emphasizes his distance from man's concept of time. Men "build our little life by hour, by day," but God is patient; he "will have patience though ten thousand years/Have brought us still no further than our fears" (p. 21). Despite this time-shrouded vision and a contempt for the present, as she contrasts the "laboured air-ships" with the first flight of a reptile--when "time leaped the world in one tremendous stride" (p. 28), the concluding note is optimistic:

> Journeying with Thee--what height we dare not dare?
> Tramps inescapable, fearless, we fare!
> On fin, on foot, on wing, Creation goes,
> And where? Comrades with Thee, who cares? Who knows?
> (p. 31).

The image of the cosmos presented in this volume is the basis of Dalton's thought and poetry. Adeline Lobb complained, in the Canadian Forum, of the "pretentious and strikingly unsuccessful attempt to voice the total impression of Life, Time, Fate, and the Universe in a single long poem" (CF4:375, S 24), but cosmology was considered by occult writers to be a proper subject of poetry.

The next volume, The Silent Zone (1926), concentrates on her own deafness and despairs that she will receive further spiritual vision. "The Ear Trumpet" attacks Edith Sitwell's satiric "Solo for Ear Trumpet", but the most interesting poem is "The Silent Zone". The title refers to areas at sea without radio navigation waves. Dalton inverts the image, suggesting the possible existence of a "radio-mind" which allows all deaf people to communicate simultane-

ously.

The dominant note of the book, though, is despondency. "In the Silence" complains that "far away, farther than ever,/Is the song that I dreamed of, it seems" (p. 83). "Chaos" does find a resurgence for the soul through heavenly peace, but its wings are "crumpled"--suggesting the destructive power of life. "Monotony" is her most extreme statement of this feeling:

> Now life's intolerable tameness,
> Subtle and dangerous,
> Has smitten into deadly sameness,
> These fleeting hours which have no fleetness,
> These strong, sweet hours which have no strength
> nor sweetness.
> Flame and adventure no more,
> Ashes and monotony
> Falling fast to stifle thee,
> Dull is the treeless shore,
> Dull is the waveless sea (p. 69).

The poem is a personal testament to the despair in the midst of a search for spiritual development which Fewster also describes.

But the sense of "flame and adventure" returns in The Amber-Riders (1929). The volume includes a series of poems concerned with the ultimate destination of dead people. Amber-riders are the persons who search in the low tide for the translucent fossil resin that is associated with immortality and electrical energy. Both qualities symbolize man's quest for increased spiritual potency. Optimism returns in this book as she declares, in "Intuition":

> I bow, with ever-increasing awe,
> Before the universe's wonder and law,
> Law so amazing, wonder so supreme,
> Nought is impossible whilst Man can dream (p. 71).

The emphasis is again placed on individual achievement. In "Destiny" growth is "solely the result of will" (p. 108). "The Kingdom" de-

clares that "in the Kingdom of Man/Is the Kingdom of Heaven" (p. 9). Her interest is entirely focused on the self, "this ever-ruling 'I',/ This mystic 'me'" (p. 26).

The Neighing North (1931) is, in contrast, devoted to a public theme--the significance of the arctic. This book attempts to develop a Canadian mythology of the barrens by creating a new symbol which exemplifies the spirit of the north. The emblem is a white stallion, left by Apollo to guard the polar regions. Although he is killed by natives loyal to Odin (the Norse god who is associated with darkness rather than Apollo's light), he remains as a ghostly symbol and a watchful spirit:

> There where no horse may live, he is calling the horsemen,
> He stands in tossed splendour and neighs at their world;
> In his eyes lurk the lightnings, from his teeth rolls the
> /thunder
> And the wind of his Spirit like a whirlwind is blowing
> Invincible strength to the "chafferers and chatterers"
> (p. 1).

The poem also features the Skraelings, faery-natives who are great hunters and defeat a Viking invasion:

> Harking from their snow-burrows rush the shaggy Kanadiens,
> Slaying the forward Food-stealers or subtly driving them
> /backwards;
> Fell was the pitiless battle, grievous the fate of the
> /Norsemen! (p. 14).

Fur-traders arrive later, but they succeed only because they submit to the horse's call and his spirit. He emerges at the end of the poem as kin to Orion, the Centaur and Pegasus. The stallion is the genius of the northern frontier:

> There he still lives, symbol of death and immortal
> /renascence;
> Still are the souls of beasts and of men drawn by
> /the lure of his beauty,
> Yearning again unto him, and making their frequent

/submission,
Pouring their souls into his, forever with fervour
/returning;
Thus and thus must be born the brooding quick soul
/of a country (p. 27).

The poem attempts to use mythology to create a new image of national identity.

The horse never did become the public symbol of the arctic, but Dalton's attempt to advance such an image stressing the unique nature of the Canadian karma reflects a theosophical outlook. She was one of the most appreciated poets by the interwar Canadian culture, particularly since her poetry was believed to indicate advanced technical ability and romantic beauty. (Dalton was an avid collector of modernist criticism and poetry but she did not employ the teachings or examples.) Although the mystical expression and verbosity are deficient in modern terms, her work is another indication of the mystical direction which co-existed with the interwar idealist culture.

Ernest Philip Fewster (1868-1947) was another Vancouver poet who was deeply engaged in mystical expression, although his encouragement of others is more significant than his verse. The poetry is vague and ethereal and lacks any personal or realistic dimensions, but Fewster was also the leader and mentor of the Vancouver Poetry Society, a group closely associated with the Julian Theosophical Lodge in the city. One of two local lodges, this group which included Duncan MacNair--the future husband of Dorothy Livesay--was specifically devoted to the creative arts. Stephen's "The Western Movement in Canadian Poetry" was a response to the ideas and goals of some of these writers. "Neo-Paganism"--the

mingling of oriental thought and the pioneer environment--was expressed to explain the outlooks and ambitions of the members of the lodge and the poetry group.

Through Fewster's initiatives, the Poetry Society established friendships with Roberts, Pierce and--in particular--Carman during the 1920's. The C. A. A. held their annual convention at Vancouver in 1926, allowing this isolated group to meet prominent Canadians from across the country who were interested in literature. The Society began as an association to encourage the reading and composition of Canadian poetry. A commemorative volume, The Vancouver Poetry Society 1916-1946: A Book of Days (1946), lists the four original objects:

> (1) the study of poetry and poetic criticism; (2) the development of a distinctive Canadian culture capable of appreciating poetry; (3) the encouragement of native poetic talent in Canada; (4) the development of public interest in the work of contemporary poets (p. iv).

Stephen made the orientation of the group explicit by proposing a fifth object, which was adopted: "art must necessarily be the symbol of a spiritual experience."

Fewster, a homeopath in the city, was specifically interested in the third goal of theosophy: the investigation of unexplored powers latent in man--particularly through wave machines which studied matter as force in vibration. This pursuit recalls Carman's suggestion, in The Kinship of Nature (1903), that "we are only made up of a mass of vibrations, all our senses being but so many variations of the power of perceiving and measuring rhythm" (p. 115). Born in England in 1868, Fewster emigrated to Winnipeg in 1887 and

moved to Vancouver in the following year, only twenty-four months after the city had been incorporated. He studied medicine in Chicago and, after a brief practice in Kansas, returned to the west coast city. He was active in literary affairs until his death, although his most fertile creative period was between 1919 and 1931.

His role as a catalyst for other writers, as an inspirer and guide, is at least as important as his poetry. In The Vancouver Poetry Society, Lionel Stevenson recalled meeting Fewster in 1920, when the future author of Appraisals of Canadian Literature was only seventeen: "Ernest Fewster, of course, was the most impressive figure, challenging everyone to debate his provocative opinions, encouraging each to share in the excitement of ideas" (p. 18). Stevenson provided a more detailed assessment of his significance in an introduction to The Wind and the Sea (1946): Fewster was

> one of those poets, rare in the modern world, who primarily are passionate philosophers, proclaimers of spiritual mysteries. He expresses himself in poetry in order to use the sensuous images by which cosmic visions may be embodied in a form comprehensible to the human mind....For an age that cannot rest content with old faiths and yet suffers misery from its lack of a new one, Ernest Fewster offers an affirmative challenge of joy, courage, and self-realization (n. pag.).

He added that Fewster was not naive or escapist, "not blind to the moods of terror and despair, but he shows how they can be resolved into richer lodes of intuitive understanding."

This final quality is evident in his most sustained work--the two title poems of The Wind and the Sea, which are over ninety pages in combined length. The first poem is a series of visions, expanded from "Eternity" in The Immortal Dwellers (1938). Eternity

appears first as "a child/With clear fresh lips and wonderful deep eyes," but is quickly transmuted into "a dreadful face/That knew all sin, and suffering, and reckoned them as naught" (p. 65). Then it changes once more, into God's face--"most glorious its features,/ Most wonderful its beauty was and power" (p. 66). The poem concludes with a summary of the tripartite vision:

> I was Eternity. In face 'twas as a child,
> Supernal, dreadful, overwhelming
> Yet methought--IT smiled (p. 66).

The poem traces the stages of spiritual progress, from naiveté, through a dark night of the soul, to a new simplicity which is also infused with bliss.

"Wind Song" also indicates the uses of the symbolism of nature to make spiritual growth and change comprehensible. The wind is invoked as "Spirit of Incarnate God" (p. 6). It is a guide to man in his development:

> Kiss man, O Thou divinest strength
> Kiss him pure, that like to Thee
> He may be absolute unto himself.
>
> For when like thee he shall know all these things
> And sing all songs,
> Nor ill nor righteousness
> Shall be his quality,
> But only soul--
> Clear spirit like to thee,
> That he shall plumb all deeps,
> And sweeping above all heights
> Yet bound to none
> Shall give life to all things,
> Receive his life from all (p. 5).

"The North Wind" section underlines the message presented in the earlier comments on eternity. The lines recount a journey into the presence of a "grief intense/An agonizing pain" (p. 10) which ends

with the spiritual truth that "the inmost heart of Grief is Joy!" (p. 12). "A Poem of the Sea" is also focused upon a spiritual perspective. The ocean is "One with the Living God.../From Thee all life is born and perfected" (p. 49). Fewster uses nature to express harmony and joy, and to stress the importance of the distinct aspects of life and awareness.

In his posthumous collection of verse, Rejoice, O My Heart (1949), there is more specific reference to nature and to Canada; but the spiritual vision is still paramount. "O Canada, My Land" declares "thou hast looked upon my soul/And made it one with thine" (p. 41), a relatively straight-forward declaration of patriotism for a theosophist. "The Northerer" specifically mentions the "clean psychic energy" of the sparsely-populated north, which the theosophists had suggested was a dominant feature of Canada's unique karma.

Fewster explores, as Dalton does, the importance of this pristine northern environment:

> But where the roaring Norther stirs
> The hovering silence of the trees
> My soul is singing to the seas,
> Or tramping through the mighty firs,
>
> Where man may keep his primal worth,
> Where life is stern, intense and keen,
> Where they who will may know the clean
> And splendid vigour of the North! (p. 39).

But nature is more usually considered as an abstract symbol of spiritual forces; it is rarely, as in Norwood's verse, a place of comfort and rest. In the individual meditation on "The Cedar", for example, the tree becomes "a song incarnate!":

> You are a Form inwrought of God,
> Spirit made substance,
> The Invisible made manifest,
> A door to God,
> A vision standing between the Eternal and Myself
> (p. 3).

Fewster's poetry constantly presents nature not as an object but as a means of gaining spiritual illumination.

The verse explores the possibilities of an ecstatic spiritual utterance. The voice, even when it can be identified as the poet's own voice, is vatic and impersonal. There is little specific imagery. There are no individuals seen as physical beings. The buildings of cities are ignored. Fewster's poetry is entirely concerned with meditation and spiritual awareness, but it lacks any points of contact with normal human existence.

A less escapist view of ultimate meaning, which considered the present to be an important arena for action, was advanced by the most interesting member of the Vancouver Poetry Society, Alexander Maitland Stephen (1882-1942). In published poetry and criticism and unpublished essays and dramas, he continually stressed the fundamental need for unfettered love, the prophetic role of the poet in creating a new era and the mythological basis of this present time of promise. Man--individual man in the contemporary world--is central to his thought and verse. These cosmic and ethical concerns are given a specific Canadian context in "Kanikilak", a play which uses Kwakiutl Indians to embody and express his theosophical outlook.

Born in Hanover, Ontario, Stephen moved to British Columbia

while still in his teens. He "punched" cattle from Alberta to New Mexico and earned a B.Sc. degree in architecture at the University of Chicago. Wounded in World War I, he returned to British Columbia to begin a career of lecturing, particularly to school classes, and promoting the nationalist and idealist Canadian literature. He edited two anthologies: The Voice of Canada: A Selection of Prose and Verse (1927) and The Golden Treasury of Canadian Verse (1928). Although he became associated with socialist and communist groups in the 1930's, his earlier writing was dominated by a quest for mystical insight and poetic truth.

"Poetry and The New Age" stresses Stephen's prophetic concept of poetry, which is central to his sense of vocation: "great poetry can be produced only by the seers--men who possess an awakened spiritual perception--a consciousness or awareness that is capable of transcending ordinary thought processes and of attaining to direct or intuitive knowledge of life." He asserts that "poetry, then, must be the product of extasis or illumination. The condition is inspiration--a moreness of life" (AMSU1:8, p. 2). Inspiration is also described as "entering into the nature of the thing to be known," with an awareness that "all material things as well as the objects in the supersensuous worlds are merely vibrations of the Self or of the Life which ensouls them" (p. 4). This is an idea which echoes the beliefs of Carman and Fewster--that all matter is the forces of life in vibration.

Since Stephen's perspective is ultimately romantic, and centered in his own perception, he attacks the use of objective--or

at least more objective--standards. He castigates the universities for their apparent failure to recognize that man has "an immortal soul striving to manifest itself through the medium of a body." Without this awareness, Stephen asks, how is it possible to judge the significance of art? "How is it possible to know whether this expression of himself be of the eternal nature of Art or of the evanescent quality of things that perish?" (pp. 6-7). His dedication to his own work left no room for alternate standards.

Stephen's view of man, as expressed in "The Open Road to Freedom", was that the human being was "the Eternal Pilgrim, who is the son of God" (AMSU1:9, p. 5). He explains that "to know that we are God--that there is no God except the eternal principle within ourselves, brings with it an outpouring of force which sweeps us forever out of the ordinary course". The "average man"--lacking this enlightenment--is lost and unaware; he "resembles, in the mass, driftwood harried to and fro by the waves of circumstance, neither knowing nor caring whence he came or whither he is going" (pp. 9-10).

Stephen wished poetry to create this awareness but he warned against entrapment in emotion, or joy in the astral state of passion which is inferior to the mental plane. In "The Essential Value of Beauty", he asserts that poetry can direct the flotsam and jetsam of humanity because it "consists of the influence of a superior nature on a less developed spirit" (AMSU1:8, p. 4). In "Poetry and The New Age" he limits this claim by distinguishing between the minor poet--who is the "slave of his vision"--and the great poet: great poetry "has always dealt with the eternal problem of the soul"

(pp. 7-8). "Parnassus in Pink", a short story, is an attack on the minor poets through the figure of Margaret Tabbit, who "could recite Bliss Carman's poetry in a soulful whisper, and one felt queer little shivers while her dreamy voice hesitated through the closing lines of 'Vestigia'." The president of a poetry group, Mrs. Paxton, is also satisfied and smug in her mediocrity; she was "quite certain that Keats and Shelley were minor poets who might have done better if they had come under her influence" (AMSU1:8, pp. 3-4). Stephen's attacks were focused on sentiment and emotion. In "Poetry and the New Age" he had written that "emotional power, unless under the restraint of a strong mind and of a will that holds it obedient can only be a destructive force or a will-o' the wisp flashing fitfully over the waters of illusion" (p. 4). Vision had to be controlled and direct man to a new perspective.

Poetry was also, to Stephen, a monument which would provide sustenance in future times. "The Relation of Poetry to Life" (1923) asserts that

> it is absolutely true that when the skyscrapers and business blocks, the exchanges and markets of the twentieth century have crumbled to the dust there will remain the few songs--the few true poems produced during these dark days, as the essence--the treasure, laid up beyond corruptability for the sustenance of future generations.

Poetry achieves this power because it is a distilled expression of the "Life Force" which urges us "to action, high and noble, for ends beyond the physical necessities of the moment." It is the most complete art, he argues, because it combines "the subjective quality of music, the intellectual quality of words and the sensorial quali-

ties of image-making as in painting, architecture and sculpture." Stephen also stresses the effective interplay between the "mantric effect of the rhythmic cadences of the poem" and "a new intellectual conception of a divine truth." Poetry is "the translator"--"the interpreter in the HOUSE OF LIFE," which "has again proved itself the most valuable guide in our spiritual adventures" (AMSU1:8, pp. 1-3).

The present age, he argued in "The Essential Value of Beauty", was materialist, a period in "which the fundamental spiritual truths have been obscured and forgotten" (p. 1). But he was optimistic that change was imminent. In "Contemporary Poetry" he wrote that "the difference is that the redundancy and didacticism of the Victorian poets is being replaced by terse, clear, suggestive images which convey truth as an impression seen like a lightning flash and felt as keenly by the receiving mind or soul" (AMSU1:9, pp. 2-3). Unfortunately, this shift is not evident to an uninitiated reader of theosophical poetry, although Stephen--at least--is able to make his own meanings clear. He also suggested, in "Poetry and the New Age", that the 1920's was the forum of a general intellectual upheaval, "in every department of life, we see the breaking up of time-worn traditions, the shifting and changing of values, the realignment of theory with a wider consciousness of life and its meaning" (p. 1). In "Contemporary Verse" he suggested that this new awareness was accompanied by "an art, universal in its scope, to embody the new vision of the human soul" (p. 1). These perspectives caused the declaration that "there is dynamite in Poetry." He also believed that "the criticism of the twentieth century will reveal

poetry as the Divine Rebel--the symbol of life--the Sword of Spiritual Will" (p. 7).

Stephen's own spirited rebellion is noticeable in his sorties against the "medieval attitudes to sex" in a preface to "The Argonaut and Other Plays" (1930) (AMSU1:5, p. 1). As Carman did, he stressed that man was a trinity--composed of body, mind and spirit. He emphasized the importance of the body in "The Essential Value of Beauty": "sex relations must be regarded as divine and all important and as the source not merely of physical but of mental and spiritual health, happiness, strength, love and beauty" (p. 8). "The Devotee" in The Rosary of Pan (1923), expresses a similarly fervent belief in love:

> No prayer ascends
> More sacred than this swift and deep desire
> To light Love's torch with passion's primal fire
> (p. 64).

"The Hands of the Virgin"--a play set in France at the end of the twelfth century--attacks hypocrisy towards sex. The Abbot attacks sensuality:

> This flesh which veils the soul is vile
> And filled with all corruption. 'Tis the snake
> Which coiled beneath a flower to strike the blow
> That blighted Eden (AMSU1:5, p. 6).

But the Abbot's rejection of the flesh is crushed when reality intrudes and he is forced to recognize his own origin. After his mother reveals that he is an illegitimate child, born of passionate union, his aesceticism is modified and he becomes more humane. The assertion of love as the ultimate value is also the theme in "A Night in Old Provence", a play which shares the same period and setting. Madeleine, frustrated by a drunkard husband, takes a

lover. She proclaims

> There lies a mystery in folded veils
> Deep hidden at the pulsing heart of life
> And few men be who know the way thereto.
> Women will starve--refuse the lesser thing,
> Content with one white hour of love or none
> If fate so will. In this the race is saved
> And held for some divine and distant end
> To which the stars move slowly but more sure
> Than shadows that bedim their golden light (AMSU1:5, p. 7).

The loyalty of individuals to their fundamental instincts is stressed by Stephen to be a glimmer of the ultimate goal of reality for man.

A similar message pervades "The Amazons". This drama begins as the female chauvinist Astra denies love, while a group of women are dicing for the favours of recently-captured males:

> Paugh!
> They're all the same...to use and to forget!
> Women have other tasks--their work to do.
> These men! Their lives are centred in an act--
> An hour of what they fondly name their love.
> Their dreams move round this theme alone and all
> The wiles and lures of sex they use to thrall
> Some doting woman to their ends (AMSU1:5, p. 2).

But another character, Thea, rejects this view. She praises love, although the view opposes marriage since "love must be free--if it would live":

> Each day, when mating things
> Stir swiftly in the grass and moons are light
> For lovers' feet, my steps will turn to seek
> The great white light above the eastern hills.
> A woman then, my heart will know her king (p. 17).

This passionate awareness of procreative activity and energy is also present in <u>The Rosary of Pan</u>:

> O Mother Substance--soul and sense, in fine,
> Of God's own thought, whence stars and atoms grew,
> We call Thee Earth or Woman. Why not divine?
> Has God forgotten that He always knew
> This want of you? (p. 14).

Finally, love is made an absolute force in "The Argonaut":

> Man, master of his fate, must bend to serve
> The ends of love. If from the path he swerve,
> Then shall his light be darkness (p. 10).

Man was true to his destiny by serving the forces of love, of union with others in a manner which expressed both his humanity and his divinity.

The more explicit stress upon man's actual divinity and his potential for further development is a central theme in Stephen's cosmology. In "Superman", in The Rosary of Pan, he claims that "the Word is flesh and all of heaven glows/Within the crucible of earthly form" (p. 68). This poem concludes with the declaration that "we are as gods!" "Man--The Creator" contains a similar theme:

> Not marble but flesh is the temple--the crown
> Of the kingdom is yours--nay--bow not down--
> For Man--the Creator--is God! (p. 118).

Immanent divinity expressed through love is the central factor in threee other plays, "Atlantis", "Dionysus" and "Kanikilak", that describe flux as a means of emphasizing man's proper role in the universe.

"Atlantis" (n. d.) features Agnis, "The Poet King of the City of the Golden Gates," who has a vision of the end of his civilization but resists a call to war. Love infuses his sense of values:

> Atlantis and its pride? A dream that shone
> One instant on the wave of time, then moved
> Down the dark hollows of eternity!
> Then what remains? Naught but the love we knew,
> The blossom in the deep which heard the pain
> Of storms that laboured far above its peace.
> That love may grow to be a perfect flower
> The stars, time, space, Creation's puppet-show
> Of fleeting shadows have their cause and end (AMSU1:1, p. 25).

Nationalist pride can not properly overcome the cosmic perspective of the theosophist. The drama ends with a Chorus of the Maidens proclaiming the indestructability of love in a mutable universe:

> Love will abide!
> In the ebb of all mutable things,
> Hear the beat of the wave as it sings!
> We are the voice of the sea! (p. 34).

Individuals affirm their humanity and continuity through love.

"Dionysus: A Dramatic Poem" (also undated) is similar in theme--an allegory which symbolizes the birth of the New Age. Dionysus is "the soul of the New Age", who is captured by the Nereids (representing the lure of the senses). He escapes this enslavement for a purposeful role: "arising from the depths of illusion, Dionysus is united to Humanity [Era] and--with her--takes up the task of building the structure of the new civilization" (AMSU1:2, p. 4). "Dionysus" also defends the vision and order created by love:

> They are not blind who cast the world away
> For visions wrought of stardust and desire.
> Theirs were the hands which fed the primal fire.
>
> They are not mad who deemed Love lord and king.
> Before the Light, with eyes uplift, they throng
> Who sensed the hidden Singer in the song (p. 5).

Man is only "an empty shrine" until "Love awaken and God arisen" within him. Then, he will "be Lord of Life in His right divine!" (p. 23).

Era, who epitomizes humanity, expands on the true potential of man:

> Man is the golden chain that links the stars
> An arch across abysmal gulfs of night.
> Who treads his path must be a god fulfilled
> Of power and glory--Lord of life and Death (p. 24).

The poem ends with a lyrical invitation to reach towards this destiny:

> O'er crumbling ruins, cross and crown, the shards
> Of empires, and the dust of phantom faiths,
> Man marches to his heritage. The stars
> Sing with him as he goes. The red dawn lights
> The beacon of the rebel--Man and God.
>
> Upon the hills the light lies like a flower,
> Full-faced, in radiant beauty, pure, serene--
> The unveiled wonder of the infinite.
> But in the lowlands, there are clinging mists,
> Grey phantoms of the night which linger still
> To build man's questing soul. Arise O King! (pp. 24-25).

Stephen sought the prophetic role and attempted to present vast patterns of history in simple terms.

The loose form of the poetic drama allowed him to offer cosmic teaching in a form which is both elastic and, with dialogue, specific. Yet the language of individual speeches is often pompous and without the sharp and immediate imagery which he predicted the new poetry would possess. These problems are also evident in The Rosary of Pan. "Spring" is an example:

> I saw spring coming in the hills
> Not as a maiden shy with footfalls soft
> As fleeting Showers, but radiant, flushed
> With all the imperial beauty of the earth--
> Her eyes twin stars which burned
> With passionate ecstasy (p. 76).

In his intense desire to express a particular insight into the nature of reality, he loads his poems with evocative and spell-binding cliches. The problem is, perhaps ultimately, intimately bound with his sense of vocation. A poem in Songs for a New Nation (1963), a posthumous collection published by his widow, illustrates the high-minded but archaic language in an extreme way:

> Wind of the Spirit that moves in the spaces eternal
> Prefigured in this last ocean unconquered of man,
> Take me as your harp: Let me, as a branch of the forest
> Be moulded and bent to the voices prophetic that gather
> And sweep on your wings through the desolate waste of
> /the world (p. 14).

The vatic vocation demanded high seriousness and, although Stephen can make his meanings clear, it also discouraged simple and effective treatment of themes.

Stephen did achieve, though, a clearer and more direct reflection of his beliefs in "Kanikilak" which is a mixture of his earlier ideas and a specific concept of the west coast Indians. His vision of a new age is central to the drama; in "Dionysus" he had prophesized a new era, "young, virile and exuberant with the fullness of life." He believed that "out of the pain and disillusionment, the travail of a world torn by lust for material gain, there is slowly but surely arising a New Order, based upon a conception of brotherhood and founded upon the eternal verities" (p. 1). With his belief in reincarnation and his stress upon the rise and fall of civilizations, he also looked back to a utopian age which had been more advanced. Introducing "Atlantis", he claimed "I, too found it impossible to decide whether my poetic drama, 'Atlantis', belongs to the realm of imagination or to that of reminiscence" (p. 2). The elements of a new age and the lost wisdom are combined in a bombastic but often effective style in "Kanikilak".

His "Myths of the Coast Indians" states that "these native peoples are the remnants of a race, which, at some period of the earth's history however far remote, were the possessors of a very high and complicated system of life, or as we usually say, of civili-

zation." He notes "beautiful concepts of the nature of man and of deity," and suggests that "they have preserved in a most remarkable degree the great fundamental occult truths in regard to the spiritual and phenomenal world." Stephen discerned seven cardinal aspects of their outlook: (i) a universe ruled by a Beneficent Intelligence which is manifested through a great diversity of spiritual powers; (ii) no matter is inanimate; (iii) the periodical descent of Avatars or Divine Messengers; (iv) man is composite as Spirit includes soul and body; (v) the next life will be similar to the present life; (vi) belief in the communication with shells of a number of disembodied spirits; and (vii) belief in the idea of reincarnation and karma as justice (AMSU1:4, pp. 1-6). The result of this study was a play using distinctively Canadian material.

The central figure in Stephen's essay was Kanikilak, who travelled "all over the world giving man his social customs, institutions and arts." He was the subject of the unpublished play, "Kanikilak, The Wanderer: A Mystery Play of the Pacific Coast Indians" by "Tolo Wahna". Kanikilak is the figure who provides man with enlightenment; but he is also attacked by those he attempts to help--"reclaiming the tribes from savagery...he first experienced the inevitable re-actions which must follow all attempts to oppose the established usages of society or religion" (AMSU1:3, p. 1). He is "the servant of all life," who reflects Stephen's own attitudes, declaring that "hate is a serpent, Love, alone, strong." Kanikilak rejects priestcraft, as all theosophists did:

> "God is a spirit like the golden sun
> Whose beams shine on the good and bad alike.

We need no priests!" (pp. 8-9).

He pits his vision against the ritual priestcraft of the Kakom-kilisla gens of the Kwakiutl Indians, particularly against the ominous god, Hamatsa, who demands homage through cannibalism.

> Gods? They are demons from some underworld
> Where death and darkness dwell. They hold this land
> In bondage to their evil will. Foul lust,
> Red hate and all the spawn of those fell deeps
> That dormant lie within the soul of man--
> Is life to them and pain, a draught to quench
> Their horrid thirst (p. 15).

Mamquam, the Shaham, finds delight in the harshness of these gods:

> Deep in the hollows of our guardian hills
> And in the caverns of the restless seas
> That break in thunder on our rock-bound isles,
> Are gods who know no pity, furious swift--
> Winged lightnings of devouring wraith and might
> To save and slay. These are our gods, well-loved.

Another character, La-tan-ah, offers a rebuttal which reflects the author's perspective: "these are no gods but ghastly dreams,/White-fanged as wolves that flit on padded feet" (p. 26).

Kanikilak is described as a loafer--with "no riches." He has "no home nor wife./He is an idler in a busy world" (p. 8), but he quickly establishes his power in the divine world: he cures a blind child; he revives a dead boy; he casts out a demon. Kanikilak is an Avatar, or Mahatma, and he recalls the lost homeland of Atlantis:

> We are the remnants of that mighty race
> Whose towers and temples, most divinely fair,
> Vied with the mystic city of the seers.
>
> In this sad world of ours, this sorrowing star,
> We see but blindly, veiled by prisoned flesh
> So that the spirit's light shines hardly through (p. 32).

Kanikilak declares "love is the only way!" (p. 33), and indicates

his role as a missionary on earth:

> There is no peace while one sad soul in pain
> Still gropes through darkened paths to reach the stars
> Which are his home and heritage. Outcast
> I wander till the last man enter in
> To that great kingdom of the rising star
> Whence I have come again to dwell with you again (p. 33).

The poem traces the return of a Mahatma, who wishes to guide others to an enlightened state.

Stephen's "Kanikilak" is the most interesting theosophical poem written in Canada. The combination of indigenous material and theosophical ideas is unique, and the two aspects are joined in a credible fashion. Dalton's The Neighing North indicated the possibilities of combining the mythic outlook with Canadian material; Stephen employs a wider scope, using the actual customs of the Pacific Coast Indian band to instruct in theosophy. The poem is faithful to both the cosmopolitan concerns of the movement and the theoretical commitment of Canadian theosophists to create a unique form of expression.

"Kanikilak" is also consistent with Stephen's other writing. As in The Rosary of Pan, love is cited as the central necessity in spiritual development and worldly comfort. His constant stress on the poet as a prophet is reiterated throughout the unpublished verse as a series of figures illustrate the means of enlightenment in effective images. The scope provided by the dramatic poetry permits Stephen to present his ideas in an elaborate manner. "Kanikilak" does suffer from bombastic and didactic tendencies but it is a unique expression of cosmic ideas in Canadian terms. In common with Brooker, he thought consistently of the moral and ethical purposes

of art. His humanitarianism is an extreme expression of the theosophical belief in the brotherhood of man, suggesting the connection between mysticism and common, mundane problems. His work did not provide the basis for a new departure in Canadian poetry; and it is, after all, only a tentative direction but it does remain as a fulfillment in "Kanikilak" of the impetus noted by the theosophist critics to develop a literature which would echo the cosmic vision while also responding to the unique karma of Canada.

The Vancouver poets were successful in being recognized as creators of a distinct regional voice in the idealist culture of the interwar period. MacInnes never received his Nobel Prize, but critics in Toronto commented on the dominant mystical and local identity of this writing. Stephen was the most ambitious member of the group, and his humanitarianism makes him the most accessible of these writers to a later reader. Fewster inspired other poets, but he was unable to create interesting verse by himself. Both Dalton and MacInnes developed similar outlooks without the benefits of initiation into theosophy and added distinct interests and tones to this body of writing. The union of mystical and regional interests was one of the interesting experiments in Canadian culture during the 1920's and 1930's.

The theosophist writers offer an important qualification to the belief that the 1920's was dominated by a vacuous nationalist and idealistic culture. The theosophists were, of course, much more closely related to the idealistic tendency than to modernism but they were engaged in a different task. They shared many of the charac-

teristics of a cult without engaging in coercion or messianic excess. Theosophists used their beliefs to extend humanist or anti-humanist tendencies which they had previously possessed and to provide an extra dimension to their idealism. Although the implications of the movement were fundamentally antagonistic to Christianity, the writers managed to flourish in the society dominated by this latter doctrine because they were content to offer their visions in non-dogmatic and non-antagonistic manners. The assurance of a larger vision or perspective allowed them to be tolerant instead of combative. These writers, therefore, were able to integrate within--and often lead--the dominant culture while maintaining their credulity towards a curious occultism.

Stephen's "Kanikilak" is the most interesting of the theosophical documents. Criticism by him, and by Brooker, is fascinating because it charts the progress of individual minds in dealing with the contemporary world. The mythological impulses of Stephen and Dalton were not sustained; the Vancouver movement lacked the access to criticism and sophistication which could possibly have created mythological structures compatible with modern aesthetic demands. One imagines Dalton, the prim English matron, and Stephen, the passionate but naive evangelist of Canadian culture, writing alone, criticized only by a few friends who shared their spiritual beliefs and the very uninspired members of the local C.A.A. branch. Vancouver's isolation encouraged and inspired the mystical poetry but it also ensured that the poets would be working in a vacuum without any standards to direct their work into more exacting and articulate lines. This problem was general within the idealist

culture; it was, however, particularly acute for these writers who were embarked on a regional expression of distinct ideas and cosmologies.

But the Vancouver writers, despite their failure to compete successfully with modernism, did provide an extra dimension to the idealist culture of the interwar period. Even Fewster's poetry suggests a vast mystical vision which had been only modestly expressed by previous writers. Dalton's cosmic view, although anti-humanist, and Stephen's empathy towards different civilizations and even MacInnes' child-like exuberance express a freedom of mind which was lacking in the staid nature poetry produced by the idealist poets. The Toronto poets were less successful in presenting their attitudes although Brooker--the gifted amateur--certainly deserves more recognition in Canadian intellectual circles for his own search. Smythe's poetry suggests that the Theosophical Society in Canada was essentially conservative and ineffectual, but sincere.

Theosophy survived in Canada and attracted important adherents in the country because it was a chameleon-like phenomenon. Although the beliefs were very different from the idealists' faith, the points of contention were not emphasized. Theosophists were more rational in their expectations than idealists, less trapped by the rhetoric of nationalism and more cautious in their reaction to the past, but the similarities are more evident than the disagreements. The theosophists were also timid in their public activity, preferring to concentrate on their personal spiritual development. It is doubtful that they would have had as great an impact on the direction of Canadian culture during the interwar period if they had been more

strident. They were conservative in their faith, reflecting the reticence in Canadian culture during this period to engage in any extremism. Norwood was applauded by the theosophists, for example, because he managed to express some of the ideas in idealistic and sentimental terms. Theosophy in Canada was not for zealots but for polite gentlemen and ladies. They did achieve a certain responsible image for a movement plagued with fraud and scandal, but this was accomplished at the expense of vitality. Theosophy probably would never have swept the country in any case, but its adherents never mounted a sustained missionary drive.

As a result, theosophy became an interesting addition to the idealist culture of the interwar years. Its members were recognized as eccentrics, similar to many creative artists, and as people passionately involved in their art but also as enthusiastic allies in the quest to revitalize Canadian culture. Theosophists irrevocably yoked their fortunes to the alternative to modernism. When the nationalist culture floundered theosophists floundered also. This was just, because they had not attempted to advance beyond the native standards of poetry or attempted to study the modern world in a serious manner.

In contrast, the Group of Seven, led by Harris, was much more successful in creating a series of cultural artefacts. Painting, with many of the same objectives as theosophical writing (particularly with the regional writers on the Pacific coast) was more successful. The poetry was a further stage in an extensive tradition of pantheistic, idealistic and transcendental poetry. The innovators in this tradition, Carman and Roberts, have been recognized as the pioneers but their successors have been generally ignored. The Group

of Seven, and Emily Carr, created new styles and perceptions of the landscape, allowing them to convey freshness while the poets seemed traditional.

Theosophy was also wounded by its own occultism. The theory of theosophy, for example, is evident in Harris' later painting, but a knowledge of Blavatsky's writings or general theosophical doctrine is not necessary to appreciate his forms or effects. The poetry does demand an understanding of the preoccupations and intentions of the writers to be appreciated. These concerns, which once seemed to be urgent and self-evident, now seem to lack relevance in a vastly different world. Even the more immediate concerns of the depression made their speculations seem luxurious and irrelevant.

The movement was, therefore, both too arcane and too pallid to reverse the onslaught of modernism. The writers, although they had wider opportunities, were too conditioned by the preconceived demands of Canadian culture to exploit the distinctiveness of their approach. But, if they had, they would have lost the benign approval that they did receive from others. Although not part of the idealist culture, the theosophists did share in the general blindness towards contemporary developments. It is difficult to see how they could have become a bridge between the two worlds: it is hard to imagine Stephen affecting E. J. Pratt's style and forms. They did, at least, work very hard at writing what they perceived to be the poetry of the future. Their unique and arcane faith illustrates the confusion of the interwar period and the grasping at synthetic solutions which would reverse the trend of the world towards materialism, cynicism and modernism.

THE SOCIAL PASSION: RESPONSES TO SOCIETY

The final feature of Canada's alternative poetry during the interwar period which deserves detailed consideration is the writing infused with a "social passion." This movement is distinct from idealism and theosophy because it was directly concerned with the actual conditions of life. Idealism tended to focus attention away from reality--reality had to be "ennobled" to be worthy of treatment in verse. Theosophy, despite humanitarian undertones, was focused upon macrocosmic vision: each suppliant certainly could improve his spiritual stature by proper acts in his present incarnation, but the stress of this esoteric learning was upon much wider vistas; cosmology was central. The social gospel, in contrast, was a Protestant Christian response to the here and now, although it shared some of the idealistic vision of the other two groups.

The social gospel asserted that environmental factors constrained individuals from fulfilling their potential for Christ-like lives. It focused attention away from individual sanctity towards a missionary zeal which reached out to recent immigrants and the impoverished, to preach the gospel through acts rather than in words. The movement stressed the context of the individual within his economic situation and society. Its thought, though, tended to be escapist; the more radical exponents left for unfettered political activity and more conservative adherents remained. The ideal was either idyllic, stressing the joys of rural life with illusionary self-sufficency, or idealistic--offering the prospect of a society

of small entrepreneurs and industrialists before a world which already faced the reality of corporate concentration.

The social gospel movement, fifty years old, was in decline by the time that the depression of the 1930's paralyzed Canada. Sentimental subjects, especially children, had been a mainstay of this verse, but writers were less assured when they handled macroeconomic themes. Responses to the depression in poetry were, as they often were in real life, confused, fragmentary and tentative. Populism was an appealing attitude, but so was admiration for fascism. Modernist writers who embraced socialism had a coherent frame of reference; the majority of writers, though, fumbled through the period with idealism rather than scientific analysis.

The social gospel was a further dimension of the idealism prevalent in interwar culture. Nationalists and theosophists wished to escape reality, to use it only as a source and touchstone for further inspiration; the social gospel wished to change the actual reality--to make it an ideal realm in reality rather than in imagination. Each Christian was urged to make a visible act of faith by responding to the contemporary realm. This spirit is captured by Jean Blewett's "Life's Grandest Things" in her Poems (1922):

> What is the grandest thing of all--
> Is it winning Heaven someday?
> No, and a thousand times say no;
> 'Tis making this old world thrill and glow
> With the sun of love till each shall know
> Something of Heaven here below,
> And God's well done for our pay (p. 173).

The stress upon creating "something of Heaven here below" is the central feature of the social gospel.

I

The social gospel was an outgrowth of the revivalism which swept Canada, along with other countries, during the late nineteenth century. Belief in the rapid change that individual purification and dedication would bring was extended to a faith that social conditions could be improved also. In addition, the vast rise in the number of converted or re-converted Christians suggested that almost all Canadians would become adherents to Protestant versions of this faith in the forseeable future. Young people's groups, including a militant Y. M. C. A., held mammoth meetings to raise the pitch of inspiration and plan the conversion of others.

Richard Allen suggests, in "The Background of the Social Gospel in Canada" (1975), that the spiritual progress of J. S. Woodsworth is representative of the Christian responses which led to an interest in social conditions. At first, Woodsworth planned to devote his whole life to his own spiritual growth; he decided, next, to become a missionary in a foreign country, to convert large numbers of people living in vastly different societies; finally, he resolved to work within his own society and assist those who would not normally come into contact with an established Protestant church.[1] Missionary endeavours in exotic lands were still prestigious in the 1920's, and the more fundamentalist sects--particularly the Baptists --tended to place their primary stress upon this work. But the major national churches--the Methodists and Presbyterians (which had already been created through separate amalgamations and were to achieve a partial union between themselves in the mid-1920's)--

directed their attention inward upon the country. Woodsworth's All People's Mission became the most celebrated example of an inner-city church, but there was activity throughout the country: in Toronto, for example, the Massey family established the Fred Victor Mission and other groups developed complementary facilities.

As a result of these initiatives, large numbers of young people, including clergymen, became acutely aware of the world--which was vastly different from that of their usually comfortable upbringings--of the indigents and immigrants who gathered in the centre of increasingly industrialized cities. Their response to this utterly different, squalid and impoverished milieu was often shock; they vehemently urged change. Intellectual support for improvement came, oddly enough, from Darwin's evolutionary theory. Christians noted that environment was a major factor in the development of species; they resolved that an improved environment would raise the caliber of the inhabitants. They also observed that Darwin's competitive principle, the "survival of the fittest", applied to war between different species. It did not logically imply, as Herbert Spencer had argued, that relations between individual men should be "red in tooth and claw." The best hope for the human race, indeed, was co-operation, since survival and improvement of the species as a whole--rather than the self-aggrandizement of individuals --was the central issue.[2]

The stress upon the importance of environment interacted with an important theological debate, whether infants who died before they received baptism would be damned. Conservative theologians in the major Protestant churches argued that they would, since they had

failed to make the necessary acts of repentance or attested to their belief in God, but the more liberal outlook dominated. All individuals, therefore, were conceived to have been born in a regenerate state by mainstream Protestant opinion. Some writers extended this doctrine to assert that the environment was the most important factor in sustaining the individual unfortified by a personal commitment to God. Since even criminals, drunkards and wife-beaters were presumably born in a state of grace, it was possible to argue that the wayward souls had been corrupted into their depravities by bad social influences. It was, therefore, imperative to ameliorate the environment in order to allow individuals the clear prospect of salvation.

Two other influences also encouraged the social gospel. Biblical studies had been refocusing attention on the Old Testament, particularly on the prophets. In addition to stressing the spiritual degeneracy of the Hebrews during their own lifetimes, these figures attacked material decadence and individual assertion. Another favourable development was the philosophical stress, particularly by Hegel, on idealism. The conception was that significant progress was achieved through a dialectical struggle of abstract concepts which would ultimately result in the resolution of an ideal state, dominated by the good, the beautiful and good government. Both the prophetic and idealistic strains were congenial: Woodsworth in particular became a modern prophet of the need for social reform; idealism was the main faith in the years following the Great War.

Allen describes the ideological and religious elements of the social gospel as "part and parcel of a vast North Atlantic tri-

angle of culture and religion" (p. 8). The movement was adapted to Canadian interests, urged forward by the vast immigration which was engineered by Clifford Sifton to settle the prairies. Adherents to the Greek and Russian Orthodox churches (with ikons which were alien to the Protestants), the eastern European arrivals were considered to be a threat to Anglo-Saxon values and faith. The Methodist and Presbyterian churches established extensive missions in the new areas; Lorne Pierce and "Ralph Connor" both served in the west. This initiative was a gesture of maturity in the country--although it was also ethnocentric and nativist. It was a sign of the determination by the leading national churches to influence the future shape of the country. This concern was also expressed in the cities.

Idealism, therefore, was applied to specific goals. The urge to create a Christian nation was not confined to pietism and conversion. The actual texture and direction of life in the country came under scrutiny. If man was, as the majority of these evangelical Protestants believed, basically good but easily capable of corruption in society, it was essential to improve the environment. Prophetic wrath against injustice was an asset.

Was the movement escapist? The social gospel, even in the late nineteenth century, was confronting the increasing concentration of industry and ruthless commercial practice. Individual entrepreneurs could emulate Andrew Carnegie and Hart Massey by becoming philanthropists, devoting a portion of their profits to the improvement of conditions, but could society itself be radically transformed by these actions? Allen notes, in a survey of studies on the social

gospel, that more recent criticism has described the movement as escapist. One study, for instance, argued that the participants "had tended to lose touch with reality and to interpret their world too much in terms of religious wish-fulfillment" (p. 6). This was certainly a problem evident in the prohibition movement, an agitation inspired by the social gospel; the participants either underestimated man's creative cupidity or had a naive belief that the elimination of one injurious factor in an unsatisfactory environment would provide the initiative for substantive rather than symptomatic change in society. A similar astigmatism affects their response to the economic order as a whole. The independent businessman, the small and enlightened workshop, or the self-sufficient rural community were offered usually as ideal states. The utopian socialism of Edward Bellamy or William Morris was a dream that often obscured the facts of reality. Particular examples of this vision, which centered on the small Canadian town, are evident in the novels of "Marion Keith".

Despite the American fashion of muckraking, the exposure of actual business practices and the increasing urbanization of Canada with its consolidation of industry, natives imbued with the social passion normally seemed determined to cling to the idea of autonomous rural areas dotted throughout the land; small towns would supply essential skills and commodities to radically circumscribed hinterlands. The people who did encounter the true economic situation often followed the example of Woodsworth and left an unsympathetic church to devote all of their energies to political or social action.

Socialism and communism seemed too radical to most; the creeds would sweep away too much that was cherished for dubious improvements. Idealists writing poetry regarded modernism in a similar light through their aesthetic perspectives.

In Canada during the interwar years the social gospel had difficulty in providing coherent solutions to economic and social problems. The idealism which it was based upon, the same idealism that activated the urge to create a renaissance in Canadian literature, was not an adequate response to reality. As Allen suggests in The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-1928 (1971), the social gospel reached its zenith in the mid-1920's. It was a movement that had a certain relevance to Canadian society forty years earlier but was increasingly escapist and irrelevant in the depression years. As the radical proponents left, it became increasingly conservative and inconsequential to the present upheavals.

In Canada, the first important act was the creation of the Lord's Day Alliance in 1900. This group, as Allen notes, was a union of labour and church organizations which succeeded in achieving the passage of the Lord's Day Act in 1907 (p. 31). The second success was the war-time approval of prohibition, which was advocated because drinking was considered to be the major curse of the working class. The Lord's Day Act, ensuring one day of rest, remained, but the ban on alcohol was less successful. The churches lost later referenda between 1923 and 1926. In the last years of the 1920's much of the energy which was planned to improve the conditions of Canadian

society was devoted to futile attempts to reinstate prohibition.

By the mid-1920's, though, the central thrust of the social gospel towards society had been deflected by internal arguments. The most radical statement of a new direction had been made at the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Canada in 1918. Report No. 3 stated that

> the triumph of democracy, the demand of the educated workers for human conditions of life, the deep condemnation this war has passed on the competitive struggle, the revelation of the superior efficiency of national organization and co-operation, combine with the unfulfilled, the often forgotten, but the undying ethics of Jesus, to demand nothing less than a transference of the whole economic life from a basis of competition and profits to one of co-operation and service.[3]

The manifesto--which anticipated the doctrines of the Commonwealth Co-operative Federation (C. C. F.) fifteen years later--was the most strident call for economic change by an established church during the interwar period. Even a year later, faced with a serious strike in Vancouver that threatened to result in violence and to mirror the extreme bitterness and polarization caused in other countries, the churches, led by the Presbyterians, began to modify their stands.

Also in 1919, in Winnipeg 35,000 workers--in a city of 200,000--halted essential services in a general strike. A Citizens' Coalition of businessmen and some of the returned, unemployed soldiers attempted to keep the city functioning and to crush the struggle. Violence erupted when the strikers were attacked by the police; the spectre of a Bolshevik uprising, which would be as ruthless and bloody as the revolution in Russia two years earlier, was real to many people throughout the country. Allen suggests that "the

millennialism of the radical social gospel clearly played a notable role in the strikes" (p. 93). Prominent Protestant clergymen, including J. S. Woodsworth, Salem Bland and A. E. Smith, had preached the doctrine of co-operation and encouraged the workers to demand fair remuneration. When the implications of their idealistic resolutions were realized by members of the churches, retrenchment was the inevitable and popular course.

"Labour Churches", which had been established in the west to combine religion and union organization, were closed or made independent. In 1919 the Manitoba Methodist Conference was unable to agree on any labour resolutions. The compromise, though, was the establishment of the Council of Industry for Manitoba, the prototype for a new system which would introduce co-operative rather than adversary labour bargaining. The Council was headed by Charles Gordon (who was well-known as "Ralph Connor", the novelist) and managed to defuse industrial strife in the province. The new stress, however, was upon mutual harmony at the expense of any change in the economic order or any dramatic amelioration in the position of the worker within the social order. Many of the radical clergy were disillusioned and engaged in separate political action.

This synthesis did not resolve the conflict between conservative and liberal factions within the movement, but it did prevent a schism, particularly in the Methodist Church, on the issue of industrial workers. While both groups remained loyal to the ideals of making "something of Heaven here below" and the intrinsic worth of the individual, their approaches were radically different. The

vast diversity of opinion is evident in two books: Salem Bland's The New Christianity (1920) is pro-labour and accepts the urban environment; in contrast, John MacDougall's Rural Life in Canada (1913) was the basis for the persistent conservative vision that suggested the independent farmer as the ideal, and attacked the growing cities.

Bland's work is an extreme statement of Christianity's responsibilities in the social and economic environment. He reflects the urgency and idealism of the 1918 Methodist conference in his introduction:

> the western nations to-day are like storm-tossed sailors who, after a desperate voyage, have reached land only to find it heaving with earthquakes. In almost every country involved in the great struggle, the war without has been succeeded by a war within (p. 8).

Arguing that "democracy is nothing but the social expression of the fundamental Christian doctrine of the worth of the human soul" (p. 18), he attacked individualism and capitalism. Although he regarded communism, as practiced in Russia, as "despotic" (p. 52), he was also profoundly opposed to the contemporary system of economics. "Business competition," he wrote, "is, conceivably, as great an evil as ever intemperance was. Its working is more subtle, more wide-spread, more deeply destructive" (p. 26).

Business was castigated for its emphasis on individual cunning and its need to exploit others to make profits for itself. In contrast, Bland's vision was millennial, responding to the prophecy in the Book of Revelation that Christ would return to earth and preside over a period of orderly government, prosperity and happiness.

Although his vision was vague, it was richly suggestive of a new harmony and partnership. "Nothing but Christianity," he believed, "can carry the Western peoples through this unparallelled crisis":

> it must be a Christianity, born as at first in the hearts of the common people, simple, democratic, brotherly; like a tree, its top in the sky but its roots deep in the common earth; treating institutions, even the most venerable, as the mere temporary contrivances that they are; with the faith of Jesus in the human heart and in the ultimate triumph of love, and a willingness, like His, to find a throne in a cross (p. 92).

His vision expressed a literal interpretation of Jesus' activity on earth; it also challenged individual Christians to emulate this life in their worldly affairs.

MacDougall's book, in comparison, attempts to conserve the earlier values and culture. Rural Life in Canada attempted to preserve agriculture as the main economic activity in the country. He began by describing rural problems, lamenting the sixteen hour days necessary to earn a living on a farm and the isolation in hinterland areas, particularly in those areas of eastern and south-western Ontario which had been unwisely developed in the mid-1880's by land companies. He proposed that the churches offer training in agricultural methods and teach clergy to provide improved rural education. MacDougall's vision is complemented by the plea of the Rev. James W. Robertson, which introduces the book:

> we are just beginning to realize that our vast areas of good lands could and should carry happy homes for millions more people and not have them huddled into big towns where the children cannot play. How stupid the people who are rich and strong and do not give the children a chance (p. 13).

The study introduces socially-successful rural communities in Alsace,

Denmark and the United States as examples for Canadians.

His outlook, though, is also based on the fear than non-Christian and non Anglo-Saxon settlers will eventually dominate the Canadian landscape. He warned against the "iron unity of discipline" and pagan practices of Mormons and attacked the drinking, fighting and immorality which were elements comprising the stereotype of the non-British settler; "a farmer of Canadian stock had sold and left that farm, he had been replaced by an immigrant of a stock morally lower than our Canadian farmer, among whom wife-beating is unknown" (p. 46). The delegates gathered to hear these remarks at a conference at Lake Rousseau in 1912 were also warned of French-Canadian infiltration into Ontario: "here in these beautiful Muskoka groves--if the present tendencies remain unchecked--before two generations shall have passed, French, save on the lips of tourists, will be the only language heard" (p. 36).

MacDougall offered the bucolic values, including beauty of nature, love of animals, privacy, freedom of life, and a healthy and creative environment (p. 140) to counterbalance the immigration to the prairies and the cities. The vision attempted to conserve the earlier, more stable pattern of settlement, but it failed to appreciate the increasing significance of the urban life in Canada. The attacks upon other social, racial and religious groups underline the defensive nature of this outlook. In contrast to Bland, MacDougall stresses the ideal of the small, self-sufficient businessman rather than co-operative action for the benefit of all.

This conservative aspect of the social gospel remained influential. The novels of "Ralph Connor", particularly The Foreigner

(1909), had achieved a wide circulation by celebrating rural life and dismissing all new immigrants as uncouth and immoral unless they were baptised and assimilated. In Idealism in National Character (1920), the Chancellor of the University of Toronto, Sir Robert Falconer, attacked the more radical exponents of the social gospel: "not a little of the unrest of the present is due to crude and irresponsible utterances as well as half thought out views of religion, morals, economics and government on the part of those who are listened to as teachers, preachers and public men" (p. 38). The conservative approach to social change was more gradual and also more paternal. Nellie McClung, a supporter of prohibition and the suffragette movement, revealed this latter attitude in a letter to Lorne Pierce on contemporary literature: "we are a literate people but unless we can give our people ideals in reading, our literacy may be our undoing." She cited the pernicious influence of "sordid stories" and declared that "life is still the same heroic adventure but the minds of the careless readers are being exploited shamelessly" (LP2 Mr 8 27).

This paternalistic bias was one of the major reasons for the decline of the power of the social gospel; a large amount of energy was devoted to attempting to rebuff the wishes of the people on the sale of spirits. The Department of Evangelism and Social Services of the Methodist church had little time for either of its stated functions in the 1920's as it petitioned against liberalization of the liquor laws and unsuccessfully fought referenda. Other significant reasons for the decline--as Allen suggests--were the energy devoted to Church

Union (which combined the Methodists, the Congregationists and a slim majority of Presbyterians into the United Church in 1925), the economic difficulties of churches in the west and the failure of the non-partisan politics of the Progressives and the United Farmers of Ontario (which were based on the anti-business and co-operative concepts of the social gospel) to change significantly the face of the country. Another reason is perhaps the most interesting: "a new secular society was arising in Canada not, ironically, unabetted by the more progressive and radical wings of the social gospel" (p. 283).

Allen suggests that the movement had reached a peak in 1924. By the midst of the depression, therefore, the forces were scattered and there was no cohesion in outlook or statement. An important offshoot, the Student Christian Movement, had participated in the editorial direction of the Canadian Forum and in the founding of the C. C. F. The intellectual arm of the new party, which was formed in 1933, was the League for Social Reconstruction, a group that restated Bland's attacks on business and capitalism and echoed his call for orderly development of the country. They also shared, as is evident in Social Planning for Canada (1935)--their major work--an optimistic belief in human nature which is similar to Bland's. The party as a whole concluded that "human beings were sufficiently beneficent to be able to create a society which was at the same time free and communal," believing that the system rather than the individuals within it, "was disorderly."[4] The C. C. F., therefore, was the most significant and recognizable legacy of the social gospel in the years of the depression.

To understand (with some sympathy) the more conservative res-

sponses it seems helpful to remember the intensity and long duration of the depression, which was a much more serious crisis to the established order than the brief flurry of rebellion which followed the end of World War I. The impact of these years upon Canadian attitudes is suggested in H. Blair Neatby's comment in The Politics of Chaos (1972) that a depression is "really a state of mind, a loss of faith in security and stability" (p. 22). James Gray, the western writer who was twenty-two years old when the New York stock market crashed in 1929, suggested that the depression "replaced a whole people's proud search for success with a dispirited search for security" (p. 6) in The Winter Years (1966). Conservatives reacted to the threats towards stability and progress with vehemence against the radicals who were attempting further change.

The depression was also a reality. Even the wry hindsight of the interviews in Barry Broadfoot's Ten Lost Years (1973) does not entirely disguise the humiliation and hardships of the period. In 1932 wheat was selling at the lowest price in three hundred years. Drought in the Palliser triangle area of the prairies increased the incidence of bankruptcies among both farmers and merchants. The labour camps established by R. B. Bennett held an average of 20,000 unemployed single men at any time during their existence between 1932 and 1936. Three thousand veterans of the camps, rebelling against the wages of twenty cents a day, their remote locations and the strict military discipline, began the On-To-Ottawa trek in 1935. When they reached Regina they were attacked and dispersed by the R. C. M. P.[5]

The roots of thinking about the depression, though, were entangled in the earlier growth of the social gospel. It was never designed, perhaps for reasons tinged with naiveté, to cope with a major industrial strife. It was a testament of the ecstatic energy released by revivalism. Certain outcasts, particularly orphans and wronged women, were the most picturesque--and vicarious--objects of concern. This approach limited sensitivity to small segments of society rather than focusing on fundamental questions. Poets were --in the idealist tradition--considered to be sensitive, and this feeling for one's fellows could be expressed adequately in peripheral subjects.

But any poetry which dared to discuss reality was revolutionary, or at least daring, within the confines of the ennobling, idealist culture. The two surviving Confederation poets in the 1930's, Charles G. D. Roberts and Duncan Campbell Scott, believed that poetry was an aesthetic rather than an applied medium and they discouraged interest in contemporary social themes by their own examples. This attitude is also evident in Theodore Goodridge Roberts' The Leather Bottle (1934), which describes poetry as "the very essence of mankind's highest efforts to express and interpret life and our speculations." The poet, he argues, holds a "sacred office" (p. 3). Charles Roberts' Twilight Over Shaugamauk (1937) echoes this conception; there is no reference in the chapbook to privation or economic problems. D. C. Scott was also aloof from mundane concerns. In his retirement, he was travelling through Europe, studying renaissance art. He was contemptuous of Anne Marriott, a

young writer who graphically described the effects of drought on the prairie in "The Wind Our Enemy", because she had not read the letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins (EKB2:140, Jn 18 46).

There was, therefore, a daring insouciance in discussing the physical realities of the world within this assertion that poetry was essentially an aesthetic pursuit. The result was that the writers who were unconventional enough to assert the importance of such material were usually viewing reality through the dominant idealist tradition. They discussed specific problems, but there is little realism in this poetry. Although they defied the arbitrators of taste, they used the decadent styles and language which the romantic Confederation poets were perceived to endorse, or simple derivations from ballad forms.

II

The basic emphasis of the sentimental social gospel writers prior to the depression was in response to Blewett's call for "something of Heaven here below"; they expressed kindness and support of moral values, including compassion. A. A. Bramley-Moore echoed Blewett's perspective in Poems on the Gospel (1923), which called on the Holy Spirit to "make the record shine more bright,/It is Thy creation" (n. pag.). The simple, dedicated clergyman was an ideal figure within this perspective. In Songs Unbidden (1920), George Winkler describes "Father Pat", an Anglican priest in a mining town:

> He never built no churches,
> Nor learned to primp or pose;
> His shoes were red and dusty
> And he never wore good clothes:
> His manners were just Christian,--

Becomin' meek and mild,
And he loved each rough-neck miner
Like a mother loves her child (p. 49).

The emphasis on simple, basic values is extended to women in Edna Jacques' From My Kitchen Window (1935). Although this volume was published during the depression, the poem reflects earlier beliefs:

I like old-fashioned things...like purity,
Virtue in women...cleanliness of thought,
Girls with clean lips and fresh, unpainted cheeks,
The deep pink blossoms of the apricot (p. 7).

This poetry stresses the general hope for improvement and the conservative attachment to traditional values.

A similar orientation is evident in the poetry which comments on the city. Like James Robertson--the director of Presbyterian missionaries who wrote the introduction to MacDougall's book--these poets described the urban environment as an unnatural blight upon nature. In The Ballad of The Quest (1922), Virna Sheard viewed the city as a place where "fluttering rags and hunger ask for pity" and "Grey Loneliness in cloth-of-gold, goes by" (p. 10). Agnes Wetherald was offended, in Lyrics and Sonnets (1931), by "the jingling, clanging, shrieking fiends of sound" (p. 221) which contrasted with rural tranquillity. The Rev. John Llwyd reversed this distinction, with an ironic manner, in Poems of Nature, Childhood and Religion (1928) with a declaration that solitude was not really found in the wilderness but "amidst the madding crowd,/Felt in the mighty city's treadmill hum" (p. 9). None of these writers indicate any affection for (or understanding of) the advantages of the growing cities.

These social gospel writers, though, were responsive to individual predicaments. Wetherald's "The School of Pain" is an indi-

cation of the particular concern for the humane treatment of children. She describes "pupils sad and white" who "shed tears like falling rain/From dreary morn till night" (p. 114). In Miscellaneous Verse (1926), Charles Lund expresses concern about delinquency:

> The boy well schooled upon the street,
> Will graduate in jail;
> No matter who the lad may be,
> The rule will seldom fail (p. 69).

This perspective was presented more graphically by Robert Watson's The Mad Minstrel (1923):

> Grubbing in alleys of filth and slime,
> Dragged from the school at ten
> Into a world of sweat and grime,
> Toiling with hopeless men:
> You who are cultured, rich and free,
> Tell me, what kind of chance has he
> Poverty, drudgery, pain and care;
> Grist for the Mills of Hell (p. 107).

Despair at the urban environment did provide the conservative social gospel writers with an understanding of the effects society had on the young; it also provided sympathy for children exploited by industrial groups.

The most extensive discussion in verse of children is James Hughes' God Made Them Good (1922). An Ontario school inspector, he was described by Pierce as "one of the greatest spiritual forces in the Dominion of Canada" and as a "seer" (CM58:57, 60, N 21). Hughes argued that "God never made a 'bad' boy." The so-called "bad" were created by coercive training in the homes and schools and by the dreadful conditions (as Lund and Watson asserted) of life still permitted in the society. His most substantial portrait is "Ben", the account of a boy charged with damaging a shed in which his step-

mother had confined him following his mother's death. He had removed a board in the unlighted shed to preserve a rose from his own mother's recent funeral. He reveals his basic goodness in a speech to the court:

> Then fearlessly the newsboy told
> His story. "Jedge, I'm ten years old,
> My mudder died a week ago,
> And I am lonely, jedge, You know.
> She had been sick three months, and say,
> I worked so hard to try to pay
> For medicines and doctor, too;
> And it was all that I could do
> To pay for them, and rent, and food,
> But mudder she was kind and good (pp. 27-8).

The poem is melodramatic but it does indicate a concern with the plight of orphans and neglected children which was reflected in the work of individual educators and ministers.

Despite the stress on morality and simple virtues, adherents to the social gospel could be sympathetic to unmarried mothers. William Neilan's Through Wayside Gardens (1931) contains a defense of "a woman who strayed":

> Blame her heart that it had trusted,
> Trusted another like you;
> Blame her eyes that she read verses,
> Verses she thought to be true (p. 68).

Lillie Brooks describes "women love has wronged" in The Land of the Northern Men (1924); they are in a hostel (behind a locked door) "lest any ray of kindliness/Shall reach our weary hearts" (p. 37). A similar sympathy was extended by Oswald Withrow, who was jailed himself on a charge--which he continued to deny--of performing an abortion. In Poems from Prison (1937), Withrow asserted that "for in the deepest depths, in the crudest criminal/There's a spark of

manhood which has only gone asleep" (p. 37). The writers retained sympathy for individuals, even though they had committed acts that the poets would not condone.

A similar understanding is evident in the prohibition propaganda, although the victims are regarded with pathos. Lund describes the difference between a successful brother who refused to drink and his unfortunate sibling who indulged in the first fatal taste of alcohol:

> Full twenty years have passed away,
> Since that decisive trysting day;
> Bill drinks and tramps and loafs and swears:
> The mark of Cain he truly bears.
>
> No friends, no home, a wreck indeed:
> With him debauch has gone to seed--
> A stain, a blotch, a cankered sore;
> Vile whiskey's product to the core (p. 14).

This animus against alcohol is reflected in "Sign Your Ballots 'No'!" in Sara Lowry-Calder's Poems (1928):

> Intemperance, on our escutcheon, has left a foul deep
> stain
> Of darksome dye, as ever marked the guilty brow of Cain,
> Shame on the callous selfishness, that sees on ruin's brink
> Brothers, or sons, and passes by unheeding, tho' they
> sink (p. 137).

While both these examples have an intrusive moral tone which is the voice of the detached declaimer, J. Arthur Nichols' Fireside Fancies (1925) indicates a more dramatic treatment of the theme. "The Wandering Kid", Nichols states, is based upon an actual encounter. Evidence is given by a victim, rather than an opponent, of alcohol:

> Though I'm just twenty-nine, I'm so frenzied from wine
> And liquors of most every kind
> That from alcohol sears I have lived fifty years
> And I'm now a disgrace to mankind.
> Yet sometimes I think that I can quit drink

(Here he placed his hand on his head)
But the feeling in here is so numbed and so queer
That I guess before long I'll be dead.

The "Kid" offers his story as a warning to others; "from the rocks and the reefs and the terrible griefs/You can guide them and start them out right" (p. 40).

All of these examples of social gospel poetry in the pre-depression period approach specific problems without describing the actual nature of the ideal life on earth. This wider outlook is present, though, in Robert Norwood's Bill Boram (1921) and Mother and Son (1925). Since, with Stephen, his theosophy was dominated by an humanitarian orientation, he was able to share in the social gospel impetus. The mystical habit of thought which was evident in his earlier poetry and in Issa allowed him, though, to present a more comprehensive image of society. The conservative social gospel approach emphasized the individual act and the specific problem. Norwood also based his vision on particular individuals, but he developed millennial, rather than remedial, solutions to the specific problems. Although the majority of his poetry (as described in the previous chapter) indicates a theosophical influence, he was also a Protestant clergyman throughout his adult life. His mystical outlook combined with the attitudes of the liberal version of the social gospel to present the most detailed accounts, in the years prior to the depression, of the actual shape and detail of the heaven which was to be instituted on earth. These two books achieve this goal because they share his orientation towards delight in nature, the centrality of love and a mystical sense of the underlying totality and harmony

of the universe.

Bill Boram recounts, in a style and mood reminiscent of John Masefield's The Everlasting Mercy, the salvation of a blasphemous and hard-living sea-captain. Bill, this central character, takes pride in the fact that "I c'n cuse higher/Than parson Blaylock aims to p'int a prayer" (p. 17), but he has the potential for salvation because he loves growing flowers: "deep in his bad heart/There lived a love for one black patch of loam" (p. 20). This trait is revealed in his uplifting talk on the qualities of flowers to Kate, the local prostitute:

> When I guts fish
> Or salts 'em down, I feels to home in hell,
> An' drink an' whorin' is me only wish;
> But when I comes upon the sight an' smell
> O' bleeding hearts or pansies, seems to me
> As I've broke promise wit' some mate I know (p. 25).

The local Pastor is "a man of gloom," whose eyes "held ice in their blend of gray and green/Small and close-set" (p. 40)--an uninspiring figure; but a local resident, Bob Fox, offers a more populist and humanistic vision of religion, especially in his praise of Christ:

> There was a man! No touch
> Of snobbishness on him. He had the gist
> Of common sense (p. 39).

Bill's salvation, the release of "somethin' like a tuber's inside me,/That tunnels up 'ard" (p. 33), follows Bob Fox's vision--not the Parson's.

He changes his way of life after kicking George (the cook of the ship and his devoted friend) close to death in a flare of temper. A mystical experience follows, which transforms him and leads to four

days of reviving George's health:

> And then I thought I heard
> A song of song. It may have been the light
> Wind through the Lottie's rigging and her spars,
> But I was sure it was the harps of night
> Heard by the shepherds on a hill of stars! (p. 62).

Although Kate is confident that "he'll be a'right to'night when he has wriggled/A hoochie koochie, afta rum an' beer!" (p. 76), Bill retains his new outlook; he renovates his home into a non-alcoholic and educational social centre "wi' lots o' lamps an' books an' magerzines/An' papers" (p. 91).

Bob Fox becomes the local spiritual leader, teaching immersion in natural beauty which he ascribes to Whitman, although it it also filled with elements of Thoreau's thought:

> The whole creation calls
> Through Walt. The stars are tangled in his hair.
> He makes the moon his flabby wide-brimmed hat.
> He wears the blue sky for a cloak (p. 85).

This orientation is echoed in the narrator's description of the new life for Bill and George:

> So had Christ come to them in love of flowers
> For Christ lies hidden in the things we find,
> He comes down shouting with the April showers;
> He leaps up with the lilies and their kind--
>
> Christ is God's ecstasy of pure creation,
> He is the artist in the soul of things (p. 77).

Bill Boram suggests the proper life for man; it is similar to Norwood's theosophical outlook, although it is less mystical and includes no hint of reincarnation.

Norwood stressed the authentic basis of his story in a letter to Archibald MacMechan. The dialect, he noted, was the mixture of Dutch and Anglo-Saxon that he had heard at Hubbards, near Chester,

Nova Scotia. "The real Bill was so affected by beauty" that he would "wipe his eyes at a quotation from Keats," he added (AM C735 N 18 21). Jean Foley, reviewing the volume in the Canadian Magazine, praised the book as "more or less perfectly adjusted to the new ideals and beliefs of the present age" (CM60:71, D 22). Other commentators, though, believed that Norwood exceeded the licence provided by the social gospel to describe real life, particularly in Bill's early speeches. W. E. MacLellan, discussing the book in the Dalhousie Review, felt that the juxtaposition of poetry and profanity was inappropriate (DR1:438, Ja 22). In an introduction to Norwood's poetry in Issa (1931), ten years later, Roberts still regretted the use of blasphemy (p. xii). These comments illustrate the constraints which remained on verse when it attempted to describe the real conditions of unrepentant life.

Mother and Son (1925) is even more daring in its philosophical implications, but it escaped the problem of direct quotation which had been attacked in Bill Boram. This volume stresses the absence of any absolute guilt in the world, particularly in the assertion that "Cain and Christ, it is all the same/Stuff of your dream--what's in a name!" (p. 41). This argument is embodied in the title poem, where a woman offers a rambling (but sociological) justification of her son's actions, although he has been hanged for murder:

> Poor little feller! In a cellar
> He learned to crawl while I went out
> To hustle for him. Such a shout
> He use to give when I come back
> At end o' day to wash the black

Smudge from his face an' damp, cold hands,
Only us poor folks understands
What fills the jails. We fights in vain
To keep our kids from curse o' Cain (p. 15).

The mother describes the boy's heroic war record and his disillusion when, after his return to Canada, he could find work only in a pool hall. He robs a gambler (who is himself guilty of pilfering in an ethical sense) on his path to murder. She concludes with a suggestion of the mystical identity of all, whether good or evil:

There'll be an end o' grief an' pain,
The strife of nations an' the strain;
When in the Lamb for sinners slain
The world shall worship Christ and Cain (p. 25).

Norwood is asserting that the perception of evil is only a phenomenon of imperfect vision, expressing the Christian belief in the meaning of the sacrifice of Jesus who atoned for man's sins.

Norwood's two volumes indicate the millennial aspect of the social gospel, reflecting the vision of a new, utopian world which was shared by the more radical members of the movement. The other poetry, in contrast, is more specific and is based on a conservative orientation. Within this approach there is sympathy for individuals but not for a radical change within society. The individuals (the children and fallen women) are pathetic, the children because of helplessness and the women because they are overwhelmed by the consequences of their indiscretions. As with the victims of liquor, these people are negative examples of the importance of moral and just action by others. But the poets offer no vision of radical change in society and no pattern for an ideal life. The perspective is of remedial change rather than readjustment or rebuilding of society.

III

These charitable concerns became a luxury during the depression. Communism, as in North America during the 1950's, was perceived to be a vague but devastating threat to human society. An example of this need to devote energy to social matters, in face of both suffering and the spectre of communism, is Guy Glover's "Esthete, 1935", which rejects the "surge of sea, the patter of little loves,/Ache of the lone heart broken and unreal" as fit subjects for poetry during the depression:

> There's something else to sing of
> (And to die for)! There's man's
> Blood and flesh to fight for!
> There's brutality to cry down,
> Injustice to hate aloud, villainies
> To unmask! And
> A new world
> To be built, (oh!) built Yes,
> And with our own hands! [6]

The poem reveals evidence of recent and over-enthusiastic conversion but it also indicates the passion which various poets expended on this theme. While many shared Glover's conviction that a "new world" should be built, others wished to retain, with equal fervency, the old world despite its imperfections.

Poems attacked alternatives and defended the established society. The example of the brutality of the revolution in Russia was advanced to prove that the ideology was a threat to decency and basic human values. Virna Sheard, normally a sweet-tempered poet, called for the damnation of Lenin in "The Dictator" because he had been responsible for the execution of the Czar's daughters:

> Lenin is dead.
> Take for his covering a flag blood-red,--

> Fasten a cap of crimson on his head,
> Call a dumb priest--lest any prayer be said.[7]
> Lenin is dead.

Oswald J. Smith's Malcolm and Marie: A Romance of the Russian Revolution (1932) provides a more explicit account of brutality in the incident of the suffering by a condemned prisoner too weak to dig his own grave:

> Then they, the one to whom the Bolshevik
> Had giv'n command, they laid upon the ground,
> And with a pair of pincers strong, they pulled
> The nails from all his fingers and his toes.
> The blood oozed forth, his eyeballs both stood out,
> He plead for death, and groans as from the damn'd
> Burst in convulsive anguish from his lips (p. 9).

Stephen Leacock supported this impression of communists in Hellements of Hickonomics (1936) with a description of an armed revolutionary attack on a bank. After the battle, the "acrid smell of the Sheepskin Coats" replaces the earlier decorum. Blood remains unnoticed on the steps of the building.

The religious and moral implications of communism were even more sensational and abhorrent to many Canadians. The Canadian Magazine featured a short story in 1930 with the title "Communist: He Believed What's Yours is Mine--What's Mine is Yours--Until He Too Was Asked to Give." The fiction describes a radical, shell-shocked soldier whose desperate wife decides to allow their son to be adopted rather than continue a life of poverty (CM73:33-4, F 30). The implication that a communal society would destroy decency and the family unit is very prominent in Smith's narrative. Marie exclaims

> Here marriage is as easy as divorce,
> And divorce as marriage. The sanctity
> Of home is gone, and fatherhood in doubt.
> If what they hear is right, that natural 'tis
> To gratify that instinct known as sex
> As 'tis to drink a glass of water cold (pp. 18-9).

Communism would destroy fundamental social and moral values.

The economic changes which the rebels espoused were described as a shift to sloth and ineptitude. Smith features a beggar who declares

> "At last I get my rights, we're equal all--
> 'Tis share and share alike in Russia now;
> And they who love it not, why, let them die:
> What right have they with wealth while I am poor?" (p. 8).

Leacock offers a similar vision of disintegration after the "angry scrum" has occupied the bank. The two new overlords are Heiny the Halfwit and Ilyitch the Commissar. Ilyitch is described in unflattering, patronizing terms:

> Ilyitch the Commissar,--heavy boots all mud,
> Ilyitch the Commissar,--features cut from wood,
> Ilyitch the Commissar with a mind misled,
> Born for a devoted Serf, made a Boss instead,
> Ilyitch the Commissar, hard as is an iron bar
> With a Hand of Lead
> But in war fearless,
> And to pain tearless,
> And underneath a smothered Fire
> Of what was once a righteous ire (p. 69).

The rational financial system of the bank is replaced with a chaotic system:

> Heaped on the Table all the while
> Is greasy Money in a pile.
> Uncounted cash from Vault and Store,--
> "Come take it, Brother, here, take more!" (p. 70).

Communism is pictured as a repudiation of rational finance and as a dominance by thugs and dullards.

A specific Canadian attack upon radicalism is evident in Robert Burns Thomson's Poems (1936). During the Winnipeg General Strike, he wrote "To Presumptuous Strike Leaders", an abusive and ranting poem:

And who are you who call me "Scab,"
Who lift the load that you despise?
Your life-long aim seems one of grab:
You lead brute strength with shifty eyes.

And when you "call a strike," you *****
Your blows affect the innocent
And from slain innocent rebounds
The boomerang ignobly spent.

Misleaders! *****! Bolsheviks!
Your vision marred by selfishness:
With hate bloodthirstiness you mix
And proffer with quack wolfishness (p. 323).

The poem indicates the virulence and passion of the attacks upon workers and their leaders when a threat to the established system was perceived.

Similar animus against organized workers is present in Margaret Gertrude Lang-Miller's Gleanings Along the Highways (1934). In "The Last Night of the Year 1931" she charged that "labour's determined, to gaff up the whole" (p. 87). The poem develops an argument that labour is the destructive force in the early years of the depression; unions are anti-Christian--the opposite of Bland's position. To Lang-Miller, their building is "not of the Lord/Nor your foundations resting, on his holy word" (p. 87). She believes that gradual improvement of the position of the workers will lead to destruction as surely as would cataclysmic change:

If I hire a man, at ten dollars per day,
Knowing well in my heart, I can't afford him to pay,
It would not be long 'till that man owns my home,
And I, its proprietor, starting to roam,
So I think it no worse, for labour to shout,
Than to rise in a body, and turn its boss out!
They both then, shall find themselves in the ditch,
With no power, no money, so neither is rich (p. 87).

Communists and socialists are described as "an element composed of

egotism and shout." They offer a plan of "heaven as earth" although "sane people, know very well, they can't give it birth." The social gospel hope to make "something of heaven here below" which was expressed by Blewett is rejected in Lang-Miller's poetry because upheaval for the very same goal now seemed to be possible. She warns "beware of their party wherever it's found" (p. 81).

Two of the Vancouver poets discussed in the previous chapter shared this distrust of the working class. Tom MacInnes, the vaudeville trifler with cosmic themes, was engaged in anti-labour activities in British Columbia, although his poetry does not reflect this preoccupation. A. M. Stephen described him as a "redoubtable hireling" and J. J. McGeer wrote, in New Frontier, that he was "an exponent of fascism, Nazism, Nationalism and What-have-You in any line that will pay" (NF1:12, N 36). He led the Citizens' League of B. C., which protected employers from union organizing and engaged in anti-socialist propaganda, particularly through radio talks.[8] MacInnes alluded to his activities in a letter to the Canadian Minister to China, Major General Victor W. Odlum, in 1942. He requested an undercover job in that country and cited his activity during the depression as an asset; he referred to "my propaganda to arouse public opinion in support of law and order during troubled periods here" (LPM53 O 16 42). MacInnes indicates that a cosmic vision did not imply a liberal outlook.

A similar, unsympathetic response to contemporary radicalism was evident in Annie Dalton's poetry. Her theosophical vision had lacked human content as she concentrated on larger cycles and denigrated the significance of the present moment. This attitude

is retained in Lilies and Leopards (1935), which includes "a plea for reasonable optimism at this time, when bewilderment and pain overshadow our sense of the upward progress of Man," who is destined for an "ultimate triumph over Time and Space" (p. 3). The commodious sense of time in her mystical outlook, which was evident in Flame and Adventure (1924), leads to an impatience with the minutiae of social equality and struggle against the depression. In "A Modern Song of Praise" she approves of the policeman, who must contend with "cheat and moron in the street" (p. 23), and the hangman, who removes the least perfect specimens from society.

Dalton also wrote:

> I have no praises for the poor
> Who batter down an open door:
> No horn of plenty can restore
> Their lost content (p. 22).

She accepted the official account of the police charge on unarmed protesters during the Vancouver sit-down strike in 1935, writing to Pierce that "Willie [her husband] says the police found some teasing or torturing the poor horses during the 'riot', and were so angry that they took their truncheons and truncheoned them all on the place where they sit down. I was glad to hear it" (LP6 Jn 25 35). She also attacked "Faithless agitators": "tyrants can never make us free" (p. 23).

"Prelude" in Lilies and Leopards restates the primacy of a mystical outlook which ignores the present:

> Beauty is not the end of Life, nor love.
> The dazzling Consequence to which we spring;
> Some prize beyond the reach of human mind,
> Some secret wisdom thought may never bind,
> Burns in the upper air and draws us hence,

> Though even the soul names not this nameless thing,
> Higher than love or beauty's excellence (p. 20).

This olympian perspective is confined in "A Garden Enclosed" (an unpublished poem written shortly before her death in 1938) by an uneasy awareness of turmoil in the present. She satirized "the new seers" who "rant, their borrowed mantles so/Like winding sheets about a palsied Limb" (LP7 F 17 38). Despite this conservative and contemptuous stance, though, Dalton did have some sensitivity to the suffering. In The Amber-Riders (1929) she had noticed the people who were "Out of Work": "those unseen, unraised eyes that brood and brood/On living death" (p. 105). Although she retained her own values, she did have sympathy for young writers who became radicals, particularly for Dorothy Livesay and Leo Kennedy. She assured Pierce that "I am no Communist," but suggested that "it is time for the older poets to step down and give the young ones a chance. It is a relief that Dorothy Livesay and others like her have begun to stir things up" (LP6 J1 18 36).

Dalton's attitude, therefore, is ambiguous. She attacked the radical leaders and dismissed attempts to improve life in the present world, but she was also aware of problems and sympathetic to the young writers. Livesay wrote, at the time of Dalton's death, that "watching the youth go out she smiled/But stretched her quiet hands in vain" (DLM2:4, 1937), a description which seems to depict accurately her own remoteness from events in the depression years. The mystical vision was still central and she was vexed that people were too short-sighted and impatient to realize the macrocosmic plan for spiritual evolution through the aeons. To grasp at the

pleasures and needs of the moment seemed to be unworthy.

A similar orientation is also part of the idealistic visions. Wilson MacDonald, the best-known poet of the interwar period, tried to combine mysticism and the transcendentalism of Carman with the arrogance and "poetic" presence which was ascribed to Whitman. His poetry was an extreme testament of the millennial tendency within the social gospel. In The Miracle Songs of Jesus (1921) he had called for a new worship (similar to Norwood's) of nature, fellowship and beauty. He considered himself a true rebel--in the mould of Jesus--and had no patience for more thoughtful and rational ideas of social change. In The Song of the Undertow (1935) he wrote that "the radical of to-day is often more narrow and bigoted than was even the worst fundamentalist" (p. 8).

MacDonald's utopian outlook was presented in Out of the Wilderness (1926); it reflects the conservative tendency of the social gospel which often lingered on into the depression years and even was intensified at times. His basic call, like MacDougall's, was for a retreat back into an earlier stage of civilization. In the new age

> shall the cities shrivel and the iron rust,
> And the picture-houses shall lock up their doors;
> The flaming magazines will cease to oil their presses,
> The gramophones will hush their gnawing voices (pp. 200-1).

He envisaged a series of self-contained settlements similar to those described in Rural Life in Canada, which would allow "each man to his own acre" (p. 200). They would be pre-industrial--"the grain will be crushed again between stones" (p. 203), vegetarian and devoted to the worship of Greek gods, art, Christianity and nature. This reactionary and escapist vision was no more comforting to people caught in the

midst of hardship than anti-labour writing or the mystical outlook of Dalton. It does represent, though, a continuing influence to encourage the supremacy of devotion, ideals and abstract values over actual events.

These writers were overwhelmed by the threats to established, although often already corroded, values. The old certainties were often asserted in the face of reason. Some writers, especially Dalton, were capable of a compassion subsidiary to their conviction that society must continue to function as it always had, but the stress was often upon a strident defense of cherished values. No understanding of socialism or communism is apparent. The embattled, and probably impoverished, owner of a house, a small business or the clerical defender of a puritanical moral system felt overwhelmed by the implications of the new ideas. The stubborn individualism was particularly nurtured and encouraged by poets in the idealist culture, although it had little basis in actual affairs. Since the unassisted individual could engage in vanity publishing or mutually adoring scenes of interwar culture, it was natural that the individual poets could defend self-assertiveness in the economy. Rhyme and metre provided the chance; understanding of complex economics was not a pre-requisite.

IV

The most wasteful dispersion of energy was directed towards populism. These writers are more diverse in their beliefs-but they were all motivated by a sense of unease and unhappiness at contempor-

ary conditions. People were told to be patient, to enjoy the purgation of their pride and to rail against the captains of industry. Which tack were the people to take? Populism was at the centre of the humanitarian impetus which activated the social gospel, but its answers were not more convincing or reassuring than attacks on communism. Attention was deflected, sometimes for venial reasons, when the future was stressed before the present. All responses were means of accomodating individuals, through resignation or anger, to actual conditions.

This approach was often impatient with and contemptuous of attempts at rational change; it focused on individual experience. Stephen Leacock attacked the earnest search for a better world in "The Social Plan":

> I know a very tiresome Man
> Who keeps on saying, "Social Plan."
> At every Dinner, every Talk
> Where Men forgather, eat or walk,
>
> No matter where,--this Awful Man
> Brings on his goddam Social Plan (p. 3).

Cheerfulness and acceptance of conditions were proposed as palliatives to the unpleasant reality. Dorothy Sproule's "Optimism" in Poems of Life (1931) establishes the tone for this writing:

> Meet trials with smiles,
> And they flee from your paths.
> Face care with gay song,
> Which is joy's aftermath (p. 27).

Hannah Graham's Be of Good Cheer (1939) offers a similar message; she urges "be of good cheer, a better day shall dawn/And radiant glory gild the world's dark page" (p. 3). This outlook is reflected by Morrison Mann MacBride, the Mayor of Brantford and a printer who

depended on advertisers for his revenue. In his Selected Poems (1938) he told of an optimistic businessman who had advertised: "now, he's 'doing nicely', thanks,/Because he didn't quit" (p. 87). Harold Wood's Chuckles From Home (1931) stressed the power of positive thinking. He taught that "the world is cruel to the man who whines/ Who moans of his heavy load" and that "the victor is he who keeps grinning and TRIES" (p. 37).

The most popular exponent of this cheerfulness during the depression was Edna Jacques. Annie Dalton declared that she "is our real Proletarian poet and beloved by all the working people in B. C." (LP6 My 26 35). Jacques praises the quiet endurance of ordinary people in "An Everyday Hero" in Wide Horizons (1937). The poem describes a man who grows vegetables to feed his family as having "courage just as true and fine/As any prince of royal line" (p. 5). "Some Things Hard Times Taught Me" declares

> I've learned that wealth is just a blind
> That sort of seals your eyes
> To little homely common joys
> That's fit for Paradise (p. 20).

A poignant mood is sometimes present in her poetry, as indicated in "Poverty" which describes a person "wondering with fearful heart what the day will bring,/Looking in bake-shop windows and hungering" (p. 12). Sympathy is evident in the portrait of the victims of the prairie drought:

> They're holding on--you know how soldiers cling
> To the last broken trench when everything
> Looks lost, and only battered bodies know
> That dogged faith that will not let them go--
> And so they stick to those brown fields and wait
> And hope for rain before it is too late (p. 23).

Hardship is not ignored, but it is made heroic and emphasis is placed on the remaining joys of life.

Jacques' cheerfulness, though, occasionally appears to be forced. "A Woman in Saskatchewan (In thanks for the carloads of food sent us during the drought)", in Dreams in Your Heart (1937) must be the only joyous tribute to relief supplies, which were unpalatable and humiliating to receive by all other accounts.

> We had no harvest here, yet we have shared
> The harvest of far fields--have dined twofold,
> On food and love. Here in this barren place
> We have shared bread and shelter from the cold,
> Warm in our veins has flowed the love you sent
> And every meal has been a sacrament.
>
> Although our tables stand so far apart,
> Still they are one, guests in a far-off place,
> Who sit with you and eat your broken bread,
> Repeating after you your whispered grace,
> Blessing the food that multiplies and heals
> The heart ache and the wounds of barren fields (p. 27).

"A Farmer's Wife" describes a woman's fear that God is exacting vengeance upon man for his evil ways, but she is reassured that improper farming actually caused the drought. She is cheered by her hour with God: "I go on with courage now to face/Whatever comes, the children will be fed" (p. 73).

A variation of this cheerful response suggested that suffering is a useful and necessary purging of the soul. Sproule's The Golden Goal counsels that "only sorrow can unlock the soul in prison/And vision give to ears blind by earth's pain." Lang-Miller was comforted with her religious vision of an imminent second coming of Christ (p. 349). In "Depression" she argued

> If life were all prosperity, with no dark days at all,
> The people then become so vain, they're riding for a fall,

Depression! means, to humble; to cast down; to abase;
Perhaps that's what it's doing,
Throughout the human race?

There's much of sin, and wickedness, to manage in its path
The innocent, and guilty, doth both receive its wrath;
It stalks abroad; regardless of its victims, or its foes,
Reigning king of all the earth, and dealing staggering blows.

Through chastening, and poverty, the people start to think,
They sober down; grow stronger; even though their spirits sink.
Though we may not, understand, or e'en think aright,
Just keep faith, and courage; and keep on in the fight
(p. 169).

This is an extreme statement of the belief that suffering brings joy and spiritual wisdom; but it is the logical extension of Jacques' suggestion that poverty directs attention to other pleasures.

Other poets were closer to the earlier social gospel poetry with its concept of the need for others to adopt responsibility and they propounded the direct interest of God in the state of his own creation. James Morton's Heresies (1937) deplored the fact that "the young men rot/In idleness that damns the soul" and "that children walk/In winter rains with half-shod feet." He concludes

Would God that men should feel it shame
To roll in wealth while others pine!
Not he who gives, but he who shares
Lives nearest to the law divine (pp. 44-5).

Julia Dawson's The Changing Year (1937) indicates sympathy in a call on the Christmas star to

Shine on the sufferers, tossing restless,
In crowded ward, or in chamber dim,
Brighten their woe with sweet thoughts of Him.
Watch o'er the children, starving, motherless,
The features wan with unchildish care,
In home of want, where poverty reigneth--
Shine, oh! pitying star, down there (p. 19).

These responses are direct comments on the actual problems of the

depression without recourse to cosmic outlooks or to homilies on the importance of cheerfulness.

Other writing (which was not dominated by obvious Christian or Marxist sympathies) simply described the ravages of the period. Oliver Hezzlewood's In The Estuary (1933) includes "Nineteen-Twenty Nine", which expresses despair at the "doubtful ways and wasted days,/ Of golden plans choked out by dross" (p. 54). Sympathy is also present in Sara Carsley's Alchemy (1935), which notes the "haunted furtive eyes of fear" of the unemployed (p. 8). Alan Creighton's Earth-Call (1936) echoes Dalton's image in "Unemployed", a poem that describes the men as "dark images, uncouth" and as "the living-dead of youth" (p. 62). In Cross Country (1939), he warned

> Pushed to the end of the pier
> After years of fighting day and night,
> We are ready for revolution (p. 55).

These comments indicate anger and frustration at the effects of the depression; but even Creighton's bravado is not a serious call for radical change. They are emotional responses that are not supported by any planned method of change.

Attempts at describing actual populist solutions recall the attacks by the Progressives on big business. Their belief that legislation could correct abuses in the economic system was a continuation of Robert Burns Thomson's solution in his Poems (1936) for the evils which had led to the Winnipeg General Strike. Instead of "strikers' revels,/Mobs of blind men led by blind" (p. 336), he proposed, in "Poverty, Disease and Crime":

> Legislation, fair taxation,
> Education, things divine,--

After due consideration,--
Such, our best men do align
To combat the said three evils,
For the welfare of mankind (p. 336).

This approach was expressed in a variety of forms in the 1930's. S. Alfred Jones, an elderly Brantford magistrate, suggested that the Italian system was the solution in Is Fascism the Answer? Italy's Law of the Unions compared with the N. R. A. (1933), because Mussolini's stress was "neither more nor less than emphasis by the individual of the duty of co-operating with other individuals for the common good of the nation" (p. 238). His publisher, Thomas Dyson Lisson (a Hamilton printer), eventually rejected Jones' perspective, although he was dissatisfied with the available political parties: "we have nothing more than the assurance of a continuance of today's conditions under either Conservative, Liberal, C. C. F. or Labour party control."[9] Lisson's approach, which led him to H. H. Stevens' Reconstruction Party, was strongly allied to the ethical sense of fairness which was the basis of the liberal social gospel tradition. In 1935 he complained that "it is difficult to comprehend after nineteen hundred years of Christian teaching, that men are yet unable to apply a voluntary fair code of ethics, in their business practice."[10] He called upon the newspapers and churches to encourage "sane government control" of the economy.[11]

Stevens' Reconstruction Party, which grew out of the Royal Commission on Price Spreads, epitomized the populist attacks on large business. The Royal Commission attacked department stores and monopoly companies for excessive profit-taking. The more liberal social gospel poetry reflects this belief that greedy capitalists were the

major cause of the depression. In Selected Poems (1938), Morrison MacBride provided a pointed contrast between soldiers and profiteers in "To-Day and Then":

> Profits piled on profits, feasts and sensuous pride,
> Seeking with cheap platitudes--their cowards' guilt to hide;
> Feasting fawning parasites--lending aid to fraud,
> Crushing mankind ruthlessly--mocking even God;
> Mouthing empty promises--duty to evade,
> Indifferent, cruel--forgetful--of the noble price
> --they paid
> --On Flanders Fields (p. 58).

Lewis Wharton's Carthage Rhymes (1930) indicates a similar outlook. "The March of Power" asserts that "Captains of industry and merchants reign/And once again millions are oppressed" (p. 28). His "Hymn to a Large Department Store" calls the organization "an ever greedy beast" and a "bloated monster which still thrives/On human blood and wasted lives" (p. 27). An agrarian analogue is evident in Rocke Savage's Prairie Trails (1938), which complains of "the fleecing of men who slave to produce" (p. 42).

George Winkler had adopted a populist stance during the immediate post-war period. Songs Unbidden (1920) declared that "robbing isn't out of fashion--but 'tis ruled and regulated," and had praised "The New Knight Errant" who attacks "the Profit Dragon" (p. 106). In Lonely Trails (1935), he describes "The Forgotten Man" of the depression:

> I saw him riding on a freight car;
> I saw him camping in the jungle
> With a newspaper under him
> And nothing above.
> I saw him tramping the roads
> Looking for work (p. 140).

Claudius Gregory's The Forgotten Men (1933)--which was published by

Lisson and written to express his ideas[12]--includes an introductory verse to outline the perspective of the volume. He describes the men "with eyes sunken deep, frames gaunt and lean," and attacks business practices:

> Forgotten men from pole to pole
> For whom the world does not provide,
> Their birthright bartered for a dole
> From lust-stained hands that cannot hide
> The filth of avaricious grime;
> The hands of those who dare to say
> That what they do is not a crime,
> And sacrilegious, feign to pray,
> While vested with a self-made might
> Evoke the laws which give them gold,
> Forgetful that these men must fight
> Else leave their bodies, stark and cold (p. 7).

The anger in these poems is directed at particular practices and large, exceedingly visible businessmen; but it does not question the free enterprise system itself.

Other calls for solutions were ethereal or vague, reflecting the insubstantial utopian vision which Wilson MacDonald had advanced in Out of the Wilderness. Helen Kirkpatrick, in her Book of Poems (1937), called on Christ to "walk again on the crest of the foam/And gather those derelicts safely home" (p. 23). Winkler's "O Island of Dreams", in Songs Unbidden (1920), is a vision of equality and mutual assistance:

> I see no signs of the former want,
> Or the old pot-bellied pride;
> But I see the smiling eyes of joy
> Bright-breaking by my side.
>
> I find no priesthood of Might thrives here,
> ("Steel hand in a silken glove")
> But a ministry teaching the gospel
> Of Equality and Love (p. 129).

These approaches did not offer specific solutions, but reflected the

millennial character of the liberal social gospel.

Yet, this millennialism has a conservative aspect. The populist ideal of the future is directed towards the individual freedom of the small businessman. There is little interest in more than remedial change to the established economic system; Stevens only attacked big business as an obvious target, and Lisson's anti-union sentiments were shared by others. Although the unemployed are sometimes seen as a mass, there is no sense of a class system in society and no call for organization of those below the level of small employers. This populism, therefore, is humanitarian and concerned with the disease within society, but it is heavily influenced by conservative values. It was a compromise, short of the C. C. F.'s call for radical socialization. Like ideal Fascism and Stevens' Reconstruction Party, the stress was on society as a series of self-contained groups all working harmoniously in the interests of the whole and themselves. This outlook contains a utopian bias in the belief that slight government regulation would return the economic system to an ideal state.

Populism was vapid; it offered no practical answers, no direct responses to overwhelming problems. At its best, in Jacques' eternal optimism, it stressed the perennial resilience of the human spirit. At its worst, as in Creighton's demagoguery, it was insipid posturing created by frustration. The attempts to describe solutions which attacked large business and called for government assistance were not heeded; the results, in any case, would have given only symptomatic relief. The social gospel was unable to offer any rethinking or re-

evaluation of its premises when confronted with a crisis beyond its initial theories of harmony and evolutionary progress. One did perhaps survive more tolerably in the dust-bowl conditions of southern Saskatchewan by being cheerful, but the attitude did not change the actual state of reality.

V

Socialists did have answers, analysis and detailed plans. Some members of the Student Christian Movement and some modernist poets--most notably F. R. Scott--gravitated to their ranks. Eventual developments led to the founding of the C. C. F. to express the response of enlightened social gospel supporters to realities. Yet many of the clergymen who left the social gospel fold did not hesitate in their plunge, preferring with A. E. Smith to become communists rather than to waste any further time trifling with compromises. This bouncing from one extreme to another is a significant pattern in responses to the depression. Leo Kennedy veered from a disembodied modernism to communism, as did A. M. Stephen, the theosophical poet, move from occultism to communism.

Communism, of course, has many debts to idealism, particularly in countries which are not threatened with its immediate political application. Idealism encouraged escapism, and communism (it can be argued) was an escapist response to the overwhelming annoyances caused by the particulars of the depression. Indeed, in a culture which had stressed the need to improve reality, it is puzzling that communism was such a small force in Canada during the depression--

although the conservative response does suggest the fear of the unknown. Communism was quixotic, transcendental in significance and millennial. Some idealists viewed the doctrine as an enemy; more accurately, it was a competitive force.

Communism made its own demands on poetry. Masses, a communist literary magazine published in Toronto between 1932 and 1934, declared that "all art...is the art of the ruling class. Art is propaganda, or more precisely, a vehicle of propaganda" (Mas1: n. pag., Ap 32). The emphasis in this periodical was, as L. F. Edwards stated, upon poetry as "a picture of life and also a criticism of life" (Mas1: n. pag., Jn 32). He argued that "the field is here, awaiting but the stroke of the quill to transfer realistic life to the written page" (Mas1: n. pag., Ap 32). "On Canadian Poetry", by M. Granite, was an explicit statement of the role which verse should play in Marxist politics:

> To the new poet, poetry is a huge peasant, with hands horny and scarred by the earth.
>
> The poet of today must give us the picture of the terrible hell that looms around him.
>
> He must join himself with the masses and learn to understand them. His love must not be the ugly love in the ivory tower of self-glorification. His love must be deeply energetic, abrim with action and struggle.
>
> Poems of miners, and strikers, and the sufferings and triumphs of the working class. Poems against police terror, against Section 98 [a portion of the Criminal Code relating to "seditious conspiracy" which was enacted in response to the Winnipeg General Strike and used against communist leaders by R. B. Bennett], against the imprisonment of workers, against deportation.
>
> Propaganda? Yes! But is this not life? Is not life propaganda? (Mas1: n. pag., Jl-Au 32).

This attitude towards poetry was reflected in a series of agitational

propaganda plays, which depicted simplistic confrontations between evil policemen or bosses and heroic workers.

The other significant Canadian periodical which reflected Marxist culture was New Frontier (1936-1937). Leo Kennedy repeated the essence of Granite's remarks in "Direction for Canadian Poets", published in this magazine. He argued that the poet must realize that "breadlines in a wheat country are illogical and criminal" and that

> poetry that is real, Canadian and contemporary can be written tomorrow by poets who worried about "dreams" and their precious egos yesterday. It will be welcomed by millions of Canadians who want their children to grow up straight-limbed to enjoy a heritage of poetry, prosperity and peace, and who want the kind of writing that will help to bring this about.[13]

These arguments were supported with poems by Kennedy, Dorothy Livesay and A. M. Stephen which described suffering and called for radical action.

Along with these two periodicals, the more moderate Canadian Forum (which was allied to the League for Social Reconstruction and described by Masses as a refuge for "petty bourgeois intellectuals" Mas2:5, Ja 34) was in the vanguard of radicalism during the thirties. The poetry and theory of Masses were intentionally simple and direct, designed to appeal to the broadest possible audience. In contrast, New Frontier and the Canadian Forum were sophisticated. Their poetry was often contributed by the leading modernist poets in Canada. The communist orientation of Masses and New Frontier made them the most distinct periodicals in the 1930's, but the more moderate stance of the Canadian Forum was eventually more influential.

The most interesting odyssey by a non-modernist poet was made by A. M. Stephen, the humanitarian theosophist who became an avid communist supporter. His earlier concentration upon the human and the specific enabled him to present direct descriptions of inequality and unfairness. He did not reject the importance of the present--as Dalton tried to--nor did he resort to generalized descriptions--as Norwood. Populism and distrust of communism were his initial stances, but he became a member of the party in the 1930's. By the time of his death in 1942, though, he had returned to theosophy. Although he was not, strictly, a participant in the social gospel movement, since his basis was theosophical rather than Christian, he was closely allied to the radical idealism of the group, and his poetry and writing indicate central attitudes which had to be resolved if the poet forced himself to transfer allegiance from populism to communism.

Stephen's constant interest in reality even while he explored mysticism is evident in The Land of the Singing Waters (1927). "Reincarnation" rejects spiritual perfection divorced from mundane concerns:

> I crave not ease nor disembodied joys:
> Earth's pain is dearer than Nirvana's bliss
> Where lulled by languorous tides sad Psyche dreams
> And sleeping Beauty waits a Lover's kiss (p. 20).

"The Artist" is a traditional mystical poem, because the creator's role is to lead "on to where Perfection's mystic light/Shines clear beyond the earth's unending strife" (p. 119); but in "An Indigent Artist" he responds to society. The artist's hands are capable of giving "new meaning to a flower," though they have been "mangled by

the ruthless Age of Iron" (p. 79). The most forceful statement in this collection is "Art":

> "You did not hear the voices of the gods
> Whispering in light and shadow there?"
>
> "Nay, I heard a cough--a soft, sharp sound--
> Saw crimson stain brave lips--
> A shop-girl's lips--and felt
> Death's grey wing brush my cheek.
> Friend, 'tis not my eyes be blind,
> My ears untuned.--'Til man shall end
> His weary pilgrimage on earth,
> True art is servant to the Lord of Life!" (p. 37).

These poems indicate a propensity to concentrate upon all facets of life, including the material and the economic.

Brown Earth and Bunch Grass (1931) is a transitional book in Stephen's development of a radical perspective. While the collection is more concerned with social issues, he rejects economic and mystical creeds for faith in nature and love. "Help" satirizes a woman complaining about the paucity of domestic servants:

> She meant that it is hard to find
> human door-mats in the bolshevistic present,
> Gastown, 1930 (p. 93).

"The Unpardonable Sin" is a bitter depiction of a Small Debts Court, which describes the debtors (seated on hard benches) and their tormentors:

> Before them, on upholstered furniture,
> sat the animals
> trained to hunt their human quarry,
> the hounds and weasels that batten
> on the misfortunes of their fellow-men,
> the collectors and lawyers
> who do the dirty work of others
> for a fee (p. 39).

Both poems express radical critiques of society.

In "Out of the North", however, Stephen explicitly attacks

Marxism for tyranny and regimentation:

> Science is God.
> Lenin is His prophet.
> A Jew has written a new scripture.
> "Wage, Labor, and Capital," they have called it.
>
> Lungs of brass
> arms of iron
> scythed with fingers of steel,
> a heart of stone,
> a skull of concrete
> has the new God of Science!
>
> In His own image
> He would create men and women,
> clamorous cogs in a machine,
> soulless, self-righteous,
> worshipping their God
> with thumb-screw and stake,
> gibbet and cord,
> after the manner of all Inquisitions (p. 56).

"Art," he protests, "is chained/to its chariot-wheel." Stephen's attack includes elements of Leacock's complaint of inflexibility and of Oswald Smith's description of brutality. But his main criticism is that communism is an emanation of the scientific and materialist outlook--a tendency which he (and other theosophists) attacked with their concept of spiritual, instead of physical, evolution.

He turns to the Bible for an alternate approach, noting the more vigorous elements of Jesus' activity; he includes the forgiveness of adultery, the imparting of the gospel to "publicans and sinners," and the revival of Lazarus. These examples suggest to him a religion of overwhelming love, which seeks fulfillment in helping others:

> Looking about me,
> I see starved features of women,
> whose aching bodies long for the touch
> of warm human flesh (p. 33).

The poem "Life" is a succinct expression of the promise of this

awareness and attitude:

> There is a grief that turns the soul
> In upon itself,
> And there is a joy that turns the soul
> Outward to redeem the world (p. 116).

This approach retains stress upon spiritual awareness but does not discount responsibility to others. Growth, indeed, is achieved through attention to the needs of others.

A description of the power of this outward-reaching energy is given in "Steel Cliffs". The skyscraper is "a bolt hurled Godward/by a cynic," who is "self-sufficient" (p. 19); he is a materialist. The creation of this new world (where man "has abolished all myths,/including his own soul") is dehumanizing:

> Night falls.
> From the cliff dwelling,
> Men and women swarm
> like ants darkening the pavement,
> or like a dance of dust motes
> stirred by a breath--
> in the distance, merely a sound,
> the fretful moan of a wave,
> broken upon stone (pp. 19-20).

A ragged, tubercular prostitute is left behind; "her thin shoes soaked by the rain" and "her cough discreetly low,/is like the rasping of iron upon glass" (p. 20). A charwoman gives her a scarf to sell for a bed for the night. This action restores love to the materialist landscape:

> The tall cliffs dwindle.
> A skyscraper is not so big....
> after all (p. 21).

Stephen transforms the sentimental treatment of fallen women--which is common in the earlier social gospel poetry--into a symbolic act that changes the nature of the urban reality. This treatment is far more imaginative than the former expressions.

The stress on love is continued throughout Brown Earth and Bunch Grass. Stephen rejects "penitential spinsters," who will elicit only a shiver among men as their bodies are carried to burial, for the redemption of lovers, who are "slaking the desire of the starved women/and the old, old hunger of the Earth" (p. 34). "My Better Part" declares "Love is of the spirit?/What is flesh if it be not spirit incarnate" (p. 79), and that the body is "Love clothed in form." "The Green World" extends this ecstasy to nature:

> Here one can believe in life,
> recurrent in form,
> eternal in purpose,
> fulfillment of a divine desire,
> promise of splendor
> beyond the limit of our imaginings (p. 42).

And, since the poet was a seer in the previous book--The Land of the Singing Waters, it is logical that "Poems" describes verse as an essential element in the struggle to combat materialism with spirit.

> They are the weapons of sound
> made to pierce the separateness
> that divides soul from soul (p. 35).

In Brown Earth and Bunch Grass Stephen offers his own synthesis of social and spiritual concerns. The spiritual controls the social in a manner which is more intense (but similar to) the subjugation of the problems of the world to the fundamental Christian orientation in the social gospel.

Stephen's "Poetry and Economics" (1931) is a prose commentary on his verse. He castigates the Russian state for its emphasis on the material dogmas of science: "has science a measuring-rod by which it can estimate spiritual essences or the intangible, aesthetic qualities which enter into the composition of a work of art?" (QQ38:

19, Wint 31). He argued that the remaining aristocratic traces of European society provided a more appropriate environment for the artist because the creator must have freedom to transcend the immediate world--even in times of severe economic dislocation. The poet

> has little right to be called a poet if he be not possessed of the spiritual force which can master the accidents of environment. He is, if he be true to his high calling, the incarnation of life itself and, being at one with its ultimate purpose, he may even be expected to see beyond democracy and to proclaim the triumph of spirit over all forms whether of government or religion (24).

The argument extends the eclecticism which the theosophists demanded in spiritual affairs to economic interests.

Stephen, though, did succumb to the communist outlook because his humanitarian concerns overwhelmed the luxury of detachment during the depression period. Three years after this article he was active in the movement. He participated in the Vancouver Post Office sit-down strike and attacked Trotskyism. He was a founder of the local branch of the League Against War and Fascism (the popular front group organized by the Communist Party of Canada). His own son suffered a clubbing by police when the On-To-Ottawa Trek was attacked by them in Regina; he received brain damage which required him to remain in hospital for the remainder of his short life. Stephen also wrote a series of pamphlets, including Hilterism in Canada and He Died for China--a memoir of Norman Bethune. He was an active organizer of the Spanish Defence Fund, which raised five thousand dollars for Loyalist orphans in that country, and the China Aid Council, which sent eighteen hundred tons of medical supplies and fifty-five hundred dollars

to assist Bethune's work with the Red Army (AMSV Scrapbook).

His new commitment to action was evident in "Canadian Poets and Critics", an address to the C. A. A. convention held at Vancouver in 1936. He judged individual poets entirely in terms of their reflection of reality, rejecting both his own earlier stress on spiritual perspectives and "back-parlor smugness and frowsy phantasies" (NF1:21, S 36). Two of his poems in New Frontier also indicate his support of radical causes. "How Are You" enumerates the main issue for Canadian communists in the mid-1930's and is totally berefit of a spiritual dimension:

> "How are you, this morning?"
> I questioned a man.
> He replied:
> In Japan a bullet has shattered my brain.
> In China, the bayonets have pierced my side.
> In America, I am crying for bread at my mother's knee.
> I am rotting in Canadian gaols.
> In Europe, I am driven by hunger and despair to the red shackles of another war.
> Thank you for asking.
> I might be better than I am....this morning! (NF1:12, Ap 36).

His earlier concern for humanity as a whole and for love as the force of redemption has been narrowed to concern for "progressive" causes. A similar pro-left but more militant outlook is indicated in "Madrid":

> They shall not fail! A myriad hands
> Outstretch from earth and sea and sky--
> The armies of the workers' dead--
> Acclaim the Cause that will not die.
>
> Though on the twisted Nazi cross
> They nail those hands that were so brave,
> The flower of liberty will spring
> Triumphant from the martyr's grave (NF2:9, My 37).

Under the stress of apparently overwhelming events, Stephen's cosmic

vision was reduced to the material concerns which he had abhorred a few years earlier.

He was shaken, as were many Canadian radicals, from his quixotic commitment by the outbreak of World War II, especially when the secret pact between Hitler and Stalin was made known. Ernest Fewster wrote Pierce in 1939 that Stephen is "very quiet, seems to understand things a bit better and appears to be on the way back to his old friends and sanity again" (LP7 D 19 39). Stephen had been expelled from the C. C. F. in 1937 for his communist beliefs but he was readmitted to the democratic socialist group during the war; he was a provincial candidate for the party in 1942. Fewster officiated at his funeral shortly afterwards, performing the theosophical rites which included cremation (AMSV Scrapbook).

Stephen's brief communist interlude in a career focused on mysticism reveals the confused and temporary responses which many people felt were necessary during the depression years. He did not advance any specific solutions in his radical poetry; the two poems in New Frontier are even more abstract and generalized than his images of suffering and the power of love in Brown Earth and Bunch Grass. His earlier poems had expressed a mysticism based on the traditional values of the social gospel. This approach was populist rather than scientific or methodical, like the majority of attempts to offer Christian values in a period of poverty.

Even Communist Party membership, therefore, could be used to mask idealism and sentimental propensities. A more sober and logical view of Canadian society was provided by socialism, particularly

through the C. C. F. Woodsworth, the first leader of the party, had shared Bland's participation in labour unrest in Winnipeg and had left the Methodist Church's groups when they adopted a more conservative stance on social issues in the aftermath of the strike. As evidenced in the expulsion of Stephen, the C. C. F. was very careful to distinguish itself from various communist groups and to present an appearance of moderation and rationality. Its call, though, was for socialization of essential industries and of the national wealth. James Allen expresses this attitude--which would give government far greater powers of intervention than the populists wished--in Maple Leaves (1938). He wished the country to "guard the masses from privation/And its wealth from favour'd few" and, in "Competition and Co-operation" suggested that "in these days of mass production, competition is a curse." He foresaw a world-wide co-operative union or confederation because "we have at our disposal/Lots for all and then to spare." (p. 46).

F. R. Scott (a poet who was also a founder of the C. C. F.) was a modernist, but his social verse indicates close affinities with the social gospel. His use of irony and satire reveals the form in which the impulse has survived, in a manner that escapes the sentiment and utopian visions which were common in much of the poetry considered in this chapter. With the loss of vitality in the social gospel movement since the 1920's, the verse had tended to become casual and occasional, responding to specific situations or experiences without the support of an overall theory. Scott escapes this difficulty because his verse is epigrammatic rather than dis-

cursive. He uses poetry to illuminate his basic attitudes rather than to explain his preferences for social amelioration.

Winkler had used irony in "Technological Leisure", in Lonely Trails, which comments on the shortage of work because a machine is

> Running long hours
> On a few drops of oil
> To bless you with freedom
> From wearisome toil (p. 120).

But this leisure leads only to "the bread lines/And kitchens for soup." Other examples are rare. The poets were too earnest and concerned to be playful. In contrast, Scott uses wit to attack injustice and ineptitude.

Both Prime Ministers in the 1930's earned his scorn. "W. L. M. K." declares that Mackenzie King "seemed to be in the centre/ Because we had no centre"; it suggests that a suitable memorial be erected to his style of government:

> Let us raise up a temple
> To the cult of mediocrity,
> Do nothing by halves
> Which can be done by quarters.[14]

"Ode to a Politician" excoriates Bennett who, as a young man, "is proud, not seeing the distant star,/To hitch his wagon to the C. P. R." (p. 55). The poem continues with a series of similar pithy comments on Bennett's record, ending with the assertion that "his whole career work had dug the grave too deep/In which the people's hopes and fortunes sleep" (p. 58) to pose as a populist in the 1935 election.

E. K. Brown, who was to stress the importance of modernism

in On Canadian Poetry (1943), denounced this social poetry as "doggerel". He claimed that "the urgency of social issues has so captured Mr. Scott's mind that he is unable to respond to great art--or to create it. That is a pity" (NF1:31-2, Jl 36). Evaluation, though, seems to have depended on political orientation. Leo Kennedy offered a different opinion, suggesting that Scott had left irrelevant and established forms of academic verse through his "pungent satires on the more revered of our national institutions."[15] Scott's poems, although less substantial than his well-researched essays in the Canadian Forum, were significant because they did provide wit and levity in the grim task of mitigating the effects of the depression.

His extended series of "Social Notes", which appeared in the same periodical in 1935, are cerebral and scathing. Intellect rather than emotional response dominates the effective portrayal of social issues. "Stevens' Enquiry", a response to the revelations of the Royal Commission, establishes the dominant ironical tone:

> How shocked were all the business men
> When they found out how low were the wages
> They had been paying their employees for years
> (CF15:220, Mr 35).

"Efficiency" mocks the common defense of capitalism and attacks on socialization. "Our huge steel mills/Operating at 25 per cent of capacity" are touted by supporters of free enterprise, he notes, as "the last word in organization."

Other poems comment directly on government inaction. "Credit" reports

> This delegation of unemployed Canadians

Has just been informed
That if the Government spent any more on relief
So that their children might be decently clothed and fed
The credit of the country would suffer.

The miasma of politicians is attacked in "Government Help":

After the strike began
Troops were rushed
To defend property.
But before the trouble started
Nobody seems to have bothered
To defend living standards.

These are effective sallies against the business orientation of Bennett's Conservative government. Another attack on one of the "more revered of our national institutions" was on the Roman Catholic clergy, a dominant force in Scott's own province of Quebec which supported the Fascists in Spain and was paternalistic and ultraconservative at home.

Have you ever noticed
How many members of monastic orders
Who have taken perpetual vows
Of poverty
And chastity
Now spend their time defending private property
And urging the poor to have large families?

This section is titled "Expert Advice".

While this satire is effective, it is also playful. The balance ensures the success of the poems, but Scott is less effective when he is suffering from frustration at reality and the lack of change. His tone becomes sarcastic in such writing, as is illustrated by "General Election":

There is nothing like hard times
For teaching the people to think.
By a decisive vote
After discussing all the issues
They have turned out the Conservatives
And put back the Liberals.

His poetry as a whole, though, is effective. The laconic, ironic stance avoids both the sentiment of the other social gospel writers and the shrill tones of Marxist verse. The wry humour tends to presume, and encourage, agreement with the ideas which he expresses.

Scott's ability is evident but his significance as an important figure in the social gospel tradition should be stressed. A very interesting criticism is present in Louis Dudek's article, "F. R. Scott and the Modern Poets", which compares the "faith, earnestness and moral energy" of his father, F. G. Scott (who was a comforting Christian poet), with the son's outlook. Dudek suggests that Scott is a transitional figure between the premodernist sensibility, which included the social gospel, and modernism. In his meditative verse, it is argued, Scott is engaged in "a retreat to positions previously prepared."[16]

The most striking support of Dudek's argument is Scott's own millennial outlook. "Overture", a central poem in his work, stresses the imminence of cataclysmic change:

> But how shall I hear old music? This is an hour
> Of new beginnings, concepts warring for power,
> Decay of systems--the tissue of art is torn
> With overtures of an era being born (p. 61).

He stresses the impermanence of life in poems which meditate on nature but his vision is essentially of a world which can be made subservient to intellect. In "Eden" Eve causes Adam's expulsion from the garden because she searches for knowledge. She is "leading him into trouble/ But he could not say she was wrong." Knowledge is more important than Adam's indolent sensibilities and self-indulgences. Evicted from the paradise, she declares, "if we keep on using this knowledge/I think

we'll be back" (p. 67).

Scott rejects the spiritual basis of the social gospel vision for an emphasis on man's inherent ability to create a paradise through rational control of his environment. This outlook is a transition from the earlier values of the social gospel to the intellectual interest in understanding and methodical change. His poetry is a revitalization of the tradition, but it also indicates a fundamental change. The earlier, conservative emphasis was upon the individual act of compassion and assistance--which would improve the world. The distance which separates Scott from the earlier conception is clear in a comparison of his work with J. D. Logan's poem, "Consecration", in Twilight Litanies (1920), which celebrates the "slum visitor":

> Sweet-faced is she, with Mary's modest mien,
> And in her heart abides not any fear;
> Rude men desist from brawls when she is seen,
> And hardened women melt when she comes near (p. 5).

Scott's "Summer Camp", in contrast, mocks the partial solution:

> All summer long underprivileged children scamper about,
> And it is astonishing how soon they look healthy and well.
> Two weeks here in the sun and air
> Through the kindness of our wealthy citizens
> Will be a wonderful help to the little tots
> When they return for a winter in the slums (p. 59).

He refuses to be consoled by the temporary or random act of charity.

Scott's approach was the more modern and fruitful. Individual action depended on a sense of community at a time when, although conservative spokesmen like MacDougall attempted to retain the close-knit communities, the country was transformed into an urbanized, anonymous conglomeration. The magnitude of the problems of the de-

pression made individual acts meaningless in any larger perspective. They required fundamental change. Some felt that hope and cheerfulness would be sufficient. Others, including the populists, wished to destroy the "trusts" of large business. Others desired socialization and intelligent planning of the economy.

Although the movement--even in its earliest years--contained conflicting conservative and liberal tendencies, it was possible to retain allegiance to the pious hope to improve the earth. The vision was often millennial, devoted to creating an actual heaven on earth; sometimes, it was fragmentary, devoted only to children or unmarried mothers. But the diffusiveness of varying goals was always felt when the movement was confounded with actual circumstances. The 1919 Winnipeg General Strike caused the radical ideas and leaders to be dropped. The depression forced a realization that problems were too immense to be solved individually. Even the small business supporters demanded government intervention. The C. C. F. simply accelerated the calls for this type of action. The social gospel was finally redundant when massive government direction of the economy and assistance to the indigent and unemployed was effected after World War II. Social responsibility was still felt by the churches, but the individual acts of compassion (which had been very necessary in the rapidly changing settlement and industrialization of the first decades of the twentieth century) were replaced by a general concern towards the quality of life and disadvantaged minority groups.

The social gospel is, however, still an interesting feature

of Canadian attitudes during the interwar period. It looked back to a romanticized rural abundance and sense of community but it was also adventurous--pioneering work in the organization of labour and the demands for equitable wages and decent living and working conditions. The movement was broad enough to include many shades of political commitment and belief in many types of economics. More than the small but dedicated number of communists in Canada during the 1930's, these writers reflected the responses in the country to economic problems. If their response was confused, particular and escapist rather than logical, systematic and realistic, this does not negate the fact that they represented a large segment of Canadian opinion and response.

The movement did not produce any lasting poetry, unless the work of Scott is regarded as the final expression of the group and not as the beginning of a new direction, but it did produce an abundance of popular writing. The real "proletarian" poets, as Dalton suggests in her description of Edna Jacques, were perhaps these usually unsophisticated writers who were so moved by the society about them that they felt compelled to write poetry. The "refined" Canadian tradition, epitomized in the Confederation school, considered this writing to be demeaning the true function of poetry, but the more popular and responsive poets were not deterred. Although the social gospel movement itself lost members after 1924 and its momentum, there is poetry extending throughout the interwar period which reveals sympathy, anxiety and commitment on the part of individuals to the immediate and the material.

CONCLUSION

The idealist, native poetry was unable to sustain an audience or any vitality during the putative renaissance of the interwar period. Verse focused on the more specific interests of theosophy and the social gospel does offer, in retrospect, more interesting and revealing images of concerns during these years, but the idealist struggles and labour were too often public performances; too little energy or respect was devoted to the actual writing of poetry which would fulfill the hopes of ardent native critics and publicists. The constant wish to live in an exciting period of creative brilliance was, however, only slowly extinguished. Some wiser supporters recognized, at the end of the interwar years, that the renaissance had been little more than a chimera but others were less willing to accept that whatever opportunities may have been available in 1919 were critically diminished. Long traditions do not die gracefully.

The idealistic poetry, however, had dominated the public perception of Canadian verse in the previous two decades. A concerted attempt to shame a golden age into existence through continuous badgering in rhetoric was a reflection of the boosterism of the 1920's in North America. A culture of promises--instead of substance --had been erected to ward off international art and modern sensibilities. The claim was to develop a specifically national culture; the effect was different--to isolate and atrophy Canadian writing by linking it to moral perceptions and anti-scientific wars. Significant international poets and progressive young Canadians were dismissed

in tones of righteous disapproval.

This was the central failure of the defensive front against modernism in interwar poetry. The public nature of the battle, most visible in the opinions of a few periodical writers and well-known poets, encouraged intransigence and discouraged inquiry. Solidarity was essential to these writers: they were creating a national literature so it seemed logical that they would agree on fundamental terms and goals. The overwhelming impact of the Canadian tradition, particularly the work of Roberts and Carman, provided a common touchstone.

Nationalism was the most powerful and practical line of defense for an outlook and style which were already understood, by the wisest adherents, to be under siege at the end of World War I. Deference to the genial, patrician standards of Roberts and the insubstantial and whimsical musings of Carman encouraged the later native poets to retreat further, to perceive a security in the past which could only be illusory. The aims of Canadian writing, although they were cast in positive terms, were substantively negative --to be non-modern, to be anti-scientific, to be opposed to contemporary thought. The narrowness of a cultural base, centered in Toronto and under the dutiful and benign censorship of editors typified by Lorne Pierce, encouraged the misleading sense of security and progress.

Young rebels, as the McGill poets indicate, had little chance of distributing their ideas or poetry beyond local campuses or communities, especially at a time when intelligent young

Canadians preferred graduate training at British and American schools rather than at a second university in this country. Professors also tended to act as custodians rather than catalysts. A handful of national periodicals and publishers, therefore, was dominant. Local poetry scenes often flourished, sustained by the device of vanity publishing, but they were only linked together through the national media and the C. A. A. A few active idealists were able, thus, to create a cocoon around the cultural life of the country. As idealism and romanticism continued to flounder in other countries more threads were spun; Canadian visions became more opaque and shrouded.

The impending rout of native poetry was, therefore, not perceived very acutely. The impoverished tradition was retained, without either inspiration or energy. Essentially, a vacuum had been gradually created. As Lorne Pierce noted sadly in later years, nothing important was being produced or thought any longer. But the public perception of the contemporary nature of our culture was slow to recognize this bankruptcy. The two decades were to pass without awareness that this dated posturing in verse was not a renaissance but a senile and hackneyed rejection of life in the present.

Theosophy shares many of these problems. Although it did escape the bemused diffusion which afflicted generalized idealism, the arcana and mysticism led usually only into a more complex web of complacency. As theosophists believed that they had discovered a magical understanding of an ultimate reality, they were loathe to apply their full attention to the actual important shifts in twentieth century outlooks in the terms which were relevant. The auto-

matic impulse to transcendentalize was bedevilling. Secure within their esoteric insights and terminology and with their own segment of the Canadian tradition to fortify faith in their activity, theosophists lived also in a world largely untouched by contemporary changes.

They were, however, more conscious and thoughtful when they examined the methods of sustaining earlier values. Their critics were more conscious that nationalism alone could result in a vapid smugness. Cosmopolitan and universal tendencies were also examined and considered. And, although modernism was firmly rejected, the perceived need to balance particular and universal concerns led to a surer awareness of the value of regional poetry--concentrating on the uniqueness of an area while also suggesting a synthesis of environment and ideas, as in Stephen's concept of neo-Paganism.

Amid the shambles of the crumbling idealistic vision, theosophists provided the most sustained and interesting bodies of individual work. The coherence provided by this vast--although often obtuse--body of thought allowed a continuity of expression and a development of insight that was very difficult for the diffuse idealist tradition to encourage. Robert Norwood, Bertram Brooker and A. M. Stephen provide particular examples of the ways in which mystical ideas could struggle with contemporary unease, reaffirming in poetry and criticism the older values and a spiritual perspective. While the idealists were usually content to bask in the assurances of the public culture, the theosophists attempted to use more sophisticated --or at least more complex--arguments to buttress the idealist structures and perspectives.

Theosophy was, therefore, an extension of the native impulse but it was not an essentially new departure. It encouraged writing which provides interesting insights into the death throes of the Confederation school in Canadian poetry but it did not offer a new alternative which could refute modernism. They very quickly adopted an ingeniousness and a passionate energy in critical writing which suggests, indeed, a sense of pressure and limited options. But theosophy was a unique response to the impending bankruptcy of the idealist vision; the brief burst of energy, with synthetic and poetic invention, suggests the resilience of even a doomed approach when faced with its increasing irrelevance. Writers were attracted to the movement because it offered the brief hope of a more coherent and sustained escape from modernism.

The case of social gospel poetry provides different insights. While the earlier verse in this genre was barely distinguishable from the general idealist writing, the economic events of the 1930's made contact with actuality more acute and pervasive. As idealism in general was predicated on an ennobled, often ethereal reality, the social gospel was based upon the vision of an ideal order on earth, an order which was often conservative but which could also be millennial and encompass an ideal communist state. When social patterns were less complex and when the Protestant clergy had more authority and presence within the English-speaking society, the vision was infrequently subject to serious dispute. By the time of the depression though, the fragmentation of visions of society and of responses to specific problems was evident.

My discussion of social gospel poetry, therefore, included an almost complete spectrum of political tendencies and suggestions. All of the examples were written with a sense of the urgent necessity to offer wisdom and counsel to leaders and individuals, but the diversity of panaceas suggests the essential confusion and lack of fundamental direction. Idealism functioned relatively smoothly when it was able to remain concerned with platitudes and generalities. When concrete realities intruded the essential vagueness was embarassingly revealed. Even the theosophists found that their responses were discordant. Concentration upon mystical experience by the individual was essentially anarchic; responses to social problems depended more on personal character than the guidance of Blavatsky, although the majority of Canadian theosophists tended to have humanitarian biases.

The only enduring suggestions from the depression years were in the scientific socialism advanced by the C. C. F. and the most enduring poetry has been in the style of F. R. Scott's witty, epigrammatic verse. The discursive and often populist or conservative responses which were logically developed from the idealist tradition were very relevant to the various groups of converted but have retained only historical interest. Even when the idealist tradition attempted to respond directly to reality and adjure, albeit briefly, vagueness, it was unable to muster much energy or insight.

Yet hope continued to linger. Even in the late 1930's and early 1940's attempts were made for a new native revival, although they were often balanced by realizations of failure. By 1935 the harshness of the depression was evident and another war was per-

ceived, generally, to be almost inevitable. Escapism through a new marshalling of the forces of idealism was offered passionately as the only true poetic task, ignoring the actual changes which were becoming entrenched in Canadian and cosmopolitan sensibilities.

The modernist poets were increasingly known and respected in academic and literate circles. Even they were threatened with obsolescence by a younger generation of writers who ironically seized and transmuted the more defensible cries of the native poets for a national and relevant literature. But the challenges of the second generation of modernists were also firmly based on an awareness that Canada was inexorably present in the twentieth century. Materialism, cynicism, science and rationalism were, to them, established realities. The poet was encouraged to move beyond these prosaic facts and create a more intense and personal, human vision but he was not urged to cling to the belief that the romantic exuberance of the nineteenth century Confederation poetry would provide the perpetual touchstone for quality or acceptibility in Canadian poetry.

Idealists continued to fight a series of battles which had been long lost. While theosophists had gained an initial focus and burst of energy from their arcane, but harmless learning, they were also trapped in the terminology and struggles which had seemed overwhelmingly important in 1920. Social gospel poetry revealed genuine concern with actual conditions but it was only occasional verse written on one narrow topic. Some writers recognized the failure and were disillusioned. Others were determined to fight for ideal-

ism even more fervently.

In 1935 Audrey Brown heralded the attempt to create another renaissance for this idealistic writing. She directed poets to "bring to their work an undivided heart and clean hands, remembering that the ministry of Beauty is holy because true Beauty is of God. He who has imprisoned a fragment of Beauty has captured a handful of Eternity" (DR15:342, O 35). But Lorne Pierce, who had been the central force in Canadian idealist publishing since the early 1920's, chastized Canadian poets a few years later for their failure to perpetuate the idealism and nationalism which had been the promise of the 1920's. He discerned a "general ineptitude, muddle-headedness and lack of moral backbone" to be a problem of the country and its literature; English-Canadian writers, he argued, "appear to have no morals, or any recognizable code of personal or public honour, or any obvious system of logical thinking." They were nihilists: "they apparently believe in nothing, are in love with nothing, hate nothing, experience nothing. Given the gift of expression nothing is expressed, at least nothing that matters" (CB20:24, Au-S 38).

The two comments indicate the dilemma which the native poetry faced at the end of the interwar period. The desire to write was still present; the results, however, were not encouraging. The idealistic and nationalist approaches were increasingly unfashionable. Momentum which existed in the 1920's had been lost, and younger writers of quality were rare. Modernism, meanwhile, had ceased to be a daring, avant-garde movement and was becoming increasingly entrenched within universities and publishing houses. A wider public was be-

ginning to understand its objectives and successes more completely. Pierce, who declared that "the chief places will go to those who have lived deeply, loved profoundly, and amid all the crackle and racket have learned to keep their souls on top" (CPM2:10, Jn 37), was attempting to retain values and ideals that had been fatally weakened in Canadian poetry.

The final years of the period did, however, include a last rallying of the forces opposed to modernism. The Canadian Poetry Magazine was founded by the C. A. A. in 1936 to serve as a forum for its members. E. J. Pratt, the first editor, adopted a latitudinarian stance, declaring that "the accepted policy of this magazine is towards the tolerant consideration of genuine poetic effort and against identity with any form of aesthetic whether old or new" (CPM1:6, Ap 36), but it became a forum for idealistic and popular expression. Clara Bernhardt, for example, wrote (in "The Poet's Function") that "without idealism art cannot exist" and that the poet "must have something of greatness in his own soul, some force beyond ordinary understanding, or his work will be shoddy and inferior" (CPM4:6, D 39). Pratt, though, was quickly overwhelmed by the sentiment and shoddiness of the poetry which had remained unpublished and unknown during the depression. He complained (in the issue following his invitation to all poets) that "too many of our contributions betray no familiarity with the great body of English poetry other than what has been printed in the school readers, and school readers are frequently more interested in moral sentiments than in poetry" (CPM 1:6, Jl 36). Sentiments which had seemed alive fifteen years earlier

were now outdated and moribund.

Pratt reminded his contributors that poetry required literary skill: "poetry is an exacting, difficult craft, and it takes years of hard work, and education, and a sense of the language"; but this conscious artistry was alien to many of the occasional poets, who believed in sincere spontaneity at the expense of craftsmanship. Ethel Frame's description of poetic composition (which was printed in this magazine) was a more typical response:

> Deliberately
> The Words come prancing
> Like a pup
> With ears alert
> That sense the mood within my heart (CPM2:56, Ap 38).

In their rejection of modernism the majority of these poets had also rejected craft and intellectual control of their work. If poetry was, as Pierce and Bernhardt assured them, the reflection of a noble soul, these strict aesthetic values seemed superfluous and pedantic.

Both the Canadian Poetry Magazine and Alan Crawley's Contemporary Verse (1941-1952) did include good examples of modernist poetry, but Crawley's periodical--with its smaller size and greater freedom for the editor--was the more successful exponent of conservative values. Crawley also stressed technique but his sympathies were with the Georgian poets--some of whom he had met in his younger days. He wrote that modernist poets were "often cold and unmusical," contrasting with the "warmth and beauty" in poetry which he did appreciate (CV5:16, S 42). He stressed the need for "tenderness" in poetry (CV 23:22, Wint 47-48) and attacked "undertones of protest, anger and bitterness" (CV12:16, Ja 45).

Dorothy Livesay was an assistant editor of Contemporary Verse, and Crawley admired her compassionate, radical writing; but a clearer indication of his central vision is suggested by his friendship with two other women who were closely associated with the magazine. Doris Ferne, an editorial board member, reflected the visionary quality of idealist writing in "On Some Canadian Verse":

> She sits in a mesmerised trance
> regarding her navel, unknowing
> her function is not photographic
> but piercing of synthetic shibboleths
> feel for the future
> pointing the ultimate goal. (CV4:15, Jn 42).

The mystical approach is echoed by the business manager, Floris McLaren:

> O the slow stream lovely, lovely no more in sunlight:
> The flotsam of quiet lives turned over and over,
> The dark destructive flood; and the plan the promise
> Spun in the current, swept toward no visible ocean
> (CV2:17, D 41).

Rejection of the modernist stress upon complex, specific statement and denial of mystical outlooks are also evident in this poetry.

The idealist writing, however, was attacked and replaced by modernism. The change was effected more easily because the idealist and nationalist impulses declined in energy. Pierce had observed the confusion and weakening of voices in his bitter comments. There was a corresponding increase in the influence and prestige of the modern poets as they continued to write verse and develop critical careers. New Provinces (1936)--the first anthology--and The White Savannahs (1936)--the first full-length critical appreciation--were supported by A. J. M. Smith's The Book of Canadian Poetry (1943), which reaffirmed aesthetic criteria as the basis for inclusion and was influenced by

his modernist perspective, and E. K. Brown's On Canadian Poetry (1943), a critical study which stressed the importance of the Canadian modernist poets.

The final claims of the native writers to be popular and relevant poets because they reflected their immediate environment were undermined by the second generation of modernist writers, led by Louis Dudek (and including Raymond Souster, Irving Layton and James Reaney.) While the modernists (particularly Smith) had emphasized classical elegance and metaphysical, detached styles in verse, the second group of poets was more responsive to contemporary experience. They specifically attacked the first modernists but they also occupied much of the ground that was still held by the idealist poets.

John Sutherland, an important critic allied to this group, argued for a new nationalism. He wished to encourage a poetry which was "blended with the life of the country," and was distressed by the "divorce of the Canadian writer from the Canadian reader": "poet and novelist have been distinguished by their inability to come to grips with their environment and to express the basic factors in experience."[1] These arguments were supported by Dudek, who attacked the "academic literature" produced by modernism:

> there is usually a certain lack of liveliness, of the sense of reality, the human touch, a content of common sense. It is the difference between understanding through emotion and experience and through the book and mind alone.[2]

Dudek called for a closer alignment of poetry with life, in order to reverse the tendency of civilization to "move away from its relation to the real currents of life." He added, "By 'real' I mean purposeful,

related to the physical basis of life, work for sustenance, economic necessity, et cetera" (p. 106).

He emphasized (along with the idealists and theosophists) the mystical and ordering power of poetry. In the "Preface" to Cerebeus (1952), Dudek asserted that "the way to freedom and order in the future will lie through art and poetry" (p. 144). This belief was expanded:

> poetry cannot change the world in a day, the world of wars, oppressions and mob-suicide which men have prepared for themselves. But in the end, only poetry, imagination, can do so. Actuality itself is a metaphor made of iron, the diseased poem which man has erected out of mass frustration, out of centuries of evil. Poetry, therefore, opposed to this, has power, immense power for good, because it is the true poem, the poem all men would live if they were free. And that is, after all, what we want (p. 145).

The tone is more worldly and more cautious than the 1920's claims for the idealistic powers of poetry, but (after another war) there was a similar fervency and faith that art could reflect the ideal--and point the way to the future.

The second modernist group, therefore, appropriated the remaining preserves of the idealistic and nationalist poets. Sutherland called for a national poetry and for an increased responsiveness to audiences. Dudek echoed the call for relevance and added a revised idealist concept of the primary power that vision could have over reality. These approaches occupied the final tenable positions of the native poets. The second group of Montreal writers combined idealism and relevance more effectively than the declining and disorganized older poets could.

Small volumes of verse, usually from vanity presses, do still

appear, offering a faint assurance that the old tradition is still lingering. The end of World War II, however, coincided with the end of any plausible claim of importance for the idealist tradition. By then even the broadest literate taste could no longer be assuaged by the amateurish, escapist and sentimental outbursts created by increasingly aged poets who--with laudable but rare exceptions--had ever deigned to be seriously concerned with the craft of verse. The achievements of more recent generations of poets have also decreased the urge to return to the reading published by friends of this earlier, alien poetry which is scattered through an almost overwhelming number of usually thin volumes.

These comments should not obscure, however, the historical and sociological fascination which the material described in this thesis does offer. This poetry of the 1920's and 1930's is based on elements of a tradition which commenced with the Confederation poets. That the tradition lingered for so long, and was considered as the basis of a new impetus after World War I is itself a significant statement on the state of Canadian culture in the interwar period. Modernists had little impact, the "official" culture was idealist and native. Although the new renaissance does now seem to have been doomed to failure from the beginning, the theosophical and social gospel poetry is interesting, revealing formerly overlooked responses to changing conditions in the 1920's and 1930's, respectively.

Advances in culture are simultaneous with retreats by older forms. This has been a record of the decline in the earlier styles of Canadian poetry that accompanied the rise of modernism in this country.

REFERENCES

A Note on References

Since the thesis includes a large number of quotations from manuscript material, periodicals and books, references have been incorporated into the text whenever possible. A description of the abbreviations used follows.

(1) Archival Material: references to archival material in the text include an abbreviation which identifies the collection and the box or file number. Correspondence is identified by date, and the principals are identified in the text. The following abbreviations are used:

AM — Archibald MacMechan Papers. Dalhousie University, Halifax.

AMSU — A. M. Stephen Papers. University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

AMSV — A. M. Stephen Papers. City of Vancouver Archives.

BB — Bertram Brooker Papers. Privately held; presently in the care of David Arnason, St. John's College, University of Manitoba.

BC — Bliss Carman Papers. In the Edith and Lorne Pierce Collection of Canadian Manuscripts, Queen's University, Kingston.

CGDR — Charles G. D. Roberts Papers. University of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

DLM — Dorothy Livesay Poetry Manuscripts. University of Alberta, Edmonton.

EKB — E. K. Brown Papers. University of Toronto.

GHC — George Herbert Clarke Papers. Queen's University, Kingston.

LP — Lorne Pierce Correspondence. Queen's University, Kingston.

LPM — Lorne and Edith Pierce Collection of Canadian Manuscripts, Queen's University, Kingston.

LR Lloyd Roberts Papers. University of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

PE Pelham Edgar Papers. Victoria College, University of Toronto.

TGR Theodore Goodridge Roberts Papers. University of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

(2) Periodicals: sources are cited in the format which follows--(CF1:28, O 21). The letters are an abbreviation of the title, corresponding to the list below. The first number indicates the volume number; the numbers following the colon, the page number. Letters and numbers after the comma indicate date of issue.

CA Canadian Author

CB Canadian Bookman

CF Canadian Forum

CM Canadian Magazine

CMer Canadian Mercury

CPM Canadian Poetry Magazine

CT Canadian Theosophist

CV Contemporary Verse

DR Dalhousie Review

Mac Macleans

Mas Masses

NF New Frontier

QQ Queen's Quarterly

SN Saturday Night

UTQ University of Toronto Quarterly

Wil Willison's Monthly

(3) Books: primary sources are identified in the text by title and author. Date of publication is included in parentheses. See the "Bibliography" for further details.

"Introduction"

[1]F. R. Scott, Selected Poems (Toronto, 1966), p. 70.

"Canadian Culture and Poetry: 1920-1940"

[1]W. W. Hiltz, Verses of a Convalescent (Toronto, 1929), p. 3 and William Howey, Canadian Carols (Toronto, 1929), p. 7.

[2]Macmillan Company of Canada, A Canadian Publishing House (Toronto, 1923), p. 16.

[3]William Arthur Deacon, Poteen (Ottawa, 1926), p. 216.

[4]Lorne Pierce, The House of Ryerson (Toronto, 1954), p. 47.

[5]C. H. Dickinson, Lorne Pierce: A Profile (Toronto, 1962), p. 36.

[6]Dickinson, Lorne Pierce, p. 57.

[7]B. K. Sandwell, "The Deforestation of Canadian Poetry" in The Privacity Agent (Toronto, 1928), p. 98.

"The Theosophical Impulse"

[1]Edward Albertson, Theosophy (Los Angeles, 1971), p. 18.

[2]Albertson, Theosophy, p. 34.

[3]Anon., The Theosophical Movement 1875-1925: A History and a Survey (New York, 1925), p. 112.

[4]A. G. Bailey, "Creative Moments in the Culture of the Maritime Provinces" in Culture and Nationality (Toronto, 1972), p. 54.

[5]Lorne Pierce, "Introduction" in Elsie Pomeroy, Sir Charles G. D. Roberts: A Biography (Toronto, 1943), p. xxi.

[6]Bliss Carman, The Friendship of Art (Boston, 1904), p. 74.

[7]Donald Stephens, Bliss Carman (New York, 1966), p. 16.

[8]The Brooker Papers have not yet been deposited in a public archives (as of June, 1979) but are presently under the care of Professor David Arnason at St. John's College, University of Manitoba. Acknowledgement is due to him for supervising the cataloguing of this material and for making the papers available for my research.

[9]Tom MacInnes, Roundabout Rhymes (Toronto, 1923), p. 11.

"The Social Passion"

[1]Richard Allen, "The Background of the Social Gospel in Canada" in The Social Gospel in Canada (Ottawa, 1975), pp. 17-8.

[2]Allen, "The Background of the Social Gospel in Canada", p. 29.

[3]Salem Bland, The New Christianity (Toronto, 1973), p. 31.

[4]Michiel Horn, "The League for Social Reconstruction and the Development of Canadian Socialism, 1932-1936", Journal of Canadian Studies, 7 (November, 1972), 10.

[5]H. Blair Neatby, The Politics of Chaos: Canada in the Thirties (Toronto, 1972), p. 62.

[6]Canadian Authors Association, Calgary Branch, Canadian Poems (Calgary, 1937), p. 21.

[7]Virna Sheard, Candle-Flame (Toronto, 1926), p. 49.

[8]AMSV, War in China and What it Means to Canada (Vancouver, n. d.), p. 9.

[9]Thomas Dyson Lisson, What Price Will I Pay for the 1935 Federal Election Farce? (Hamilton, 1935), p. 4.

[10]Lisson, What Price, p. 8.

[11]Lisson, What Price, p. 6.

[12]Interview with Mrs. D. Blair (née Lisson) Smith at Burlington, Ontario, May 5, 1977.

[13]Peter Stevens, ed., The McGill Movement (Toronto, 1969), p. 19.

[14]F. R. Scott, Selected Poems (Toronto, 1966), p. 61.

[15]Leo Kennedy, "Direction for Canadian Poets" in Stevens, ed., The McGill Movement, p. 16.

[16]Louis Dudek, "F. R. Scott and the Modern Poets", Northern Review, 4 (December, 1950-January, 1951), p. 15.

"Conclusion"

[1]John Sutherland, Essays, Controversies and Poems (Toronto, 1972), p. 35.

[2]Louis Dudek, "Academic Literature" in Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski, eds., The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada (Toronto, 1967), p. 106.

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